

Role of Media in Changing Millets Consumption Pattern

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ABSTRACT

Millets have been an integral part of our diet from ancient times. The humble *bajra-moth* khichri made on occasion of *Makarsankranti* festival to puffed *jowar* laddus were part and parcels of our traditional food before green revolution. Now with the celebration of the year of the millets the demand for millet based products and their acceptability has increased dramatically. This paper compares the traditional ways of millets consumption to modern new found ways of millet consumption. Various factors have been responsible for shift from utilitarian ways of millet consumption to hedonic consumption of millets media is one such factor. Media plays important role in creating awareness about importance of millet consumption. The research was conducted using secondary data sources like news articles, internet resources and personal interviews. The role of media and agencies in promoting millets and influencing consumers to accept and adapt to a millet based diet is explored in this paper. The paper concludes that millets have covered a long way from being part of staple diet to gain popularity as rich culinary heritage of India in G20 summit and there is no looking back from this point onwards. This newly found hedonic consumption pattern lays foundation for numerous future entrepreneurship opportunities.

Keywords : Role of media, Millets, *Makarsankranti*, *Jowar*, *Bajra-moh*

INTRODUCTION

Millets have been an integral part of our diet from ancient times. The humble *bajra-moth* khichri made on occasion of *Makarsankranti* festival to puffed *jowar* laddus were part and parcels of our traditional food before green revolution. Now with the celebration of the year of the millets the demand for millet based products and their acceptability has increased dramatically. This paper compares the traditional ways of millets consumption to modern new found ways of millet consumption. Various factors have been responsible for shift from utilitarian ways of millet consumption to hedonic consumption of millets media is one such factor. Media plays important role in creating awareness about importance of millet consumption.

Utilitarian consumption means cognitive driven, functional or practical consumption as in traditional ways of consuming millets making a *khichri* or *roti* with

minimal household processing. Hedonic consumption means taste, price, environmental and health factors driving the food choices which means using ready to eat products based on millets (Maehle *et al.*, 2015).

Purpose of the study:

The main aim of this study is to understand the change in consumer choices and factors affecting the modern millet consumption pattern among selected population.

Objectives:

1. To enlist traditional and contemporary millet based foods consumed by educated consumers.
2. To identify the reasons behind hedonic consumption of millets.

METHODOLOGY

Purposive sampling method was used to choose

subjects for this study. The reason being this study wanted to enlist factors causing the undercurrent shift in consumption pattern of millets. Millets, where once considered poor man's staple are now being promoted as rich culinary heritage foods of India as showcased in G20 summit.

The criteria used for subject selection (n=50) was inclusion of educated, employed, medium to high income group subjects those who have access to social media, news and other sources of information which can influence their consumer behavior and willingness to participate in study. Employees of various organizations like school, college and bank were contacted and interview was conducted face to face.

Data was collected using personal interview using structured questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of subjects revealed that most of subjects were employed, females (76 %). Forty six per cent of the subjects were more than 40 years of age. Most of them belonged to general category, were graduates, married and belonged to middle to high class economically (Table 1). The subjects from middle to high class were purposively selected for better understanding on the consumer behavior towards millet consumption.

Table 1 : Demographic profile of subjects

Characteristic	(n=50)
Gender	
Female	38(76)
Male	12(24)
Age	
<30 years	12(24)
30-40 years	15(30)
>40 years	23(46)
Caste	
General	40(80)
SC	6(12)
OBC	4(8)
Education level	
Graduation or above	49(98)
High school	1(2)
Marital status	
Married	36(72)
Single	8(16)
Family Income	
5-7 lakh	12(24)
More than 7 lakh	38(76)

Figures in parentheses denote percentage

The educated and employed upper middle class has the purchasing power as well as they are educated enough to be likely influenced by various media covers of millets benefits and latest products available.

Millet consumption among subjects:

Thirty per cent of subjects stated that they never consumed any millet product. Whereas 70 per cent of subjects admitted that they consumed millets in one form or other (Fig. 1).

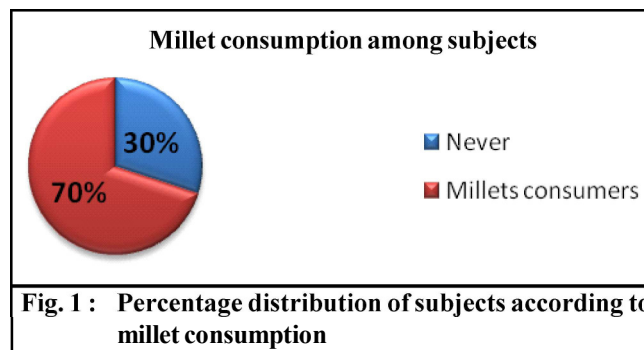
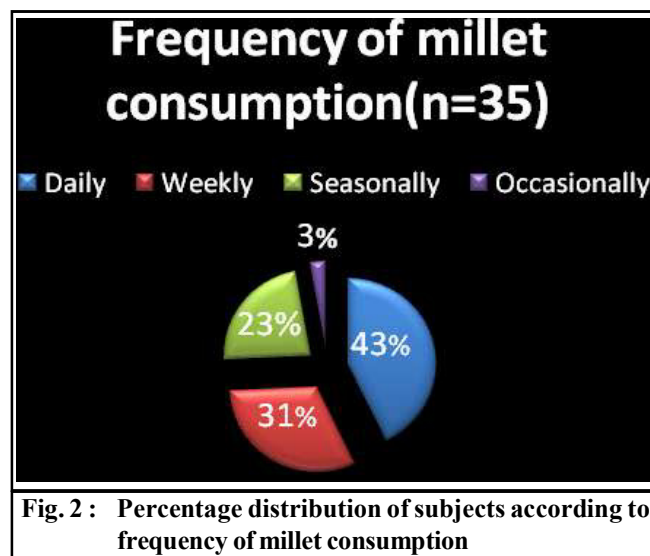


Fig. 2 shows the percentage distribution of frequency of millet consumption in subjects. Most of subjects consumed millets everyday (43 %), 31 per cent consumed millets weekly while 23 per cent consumed millets seasonally. The millet consumption pattern reveals that among the selected subjects millets are part of daily diet in one form or other. This shows that people are becoming aware of benefits of millets consumption and have started incorporating millets in their daily diets. This is in contrast to Kalaiselvi *et al.* (2016) where only 24 per cent of



subjects consumed millets daily. The major reason for consuming millets among subjects was weight loss (60 %), while 20 per cent consumed millets for adding variety and taste to their diet. Other health benefits such as blood sugar control relief from constipation and improve cholesterol profile were listed by 14 per cent subjects who consumed millets (Fig. 3).

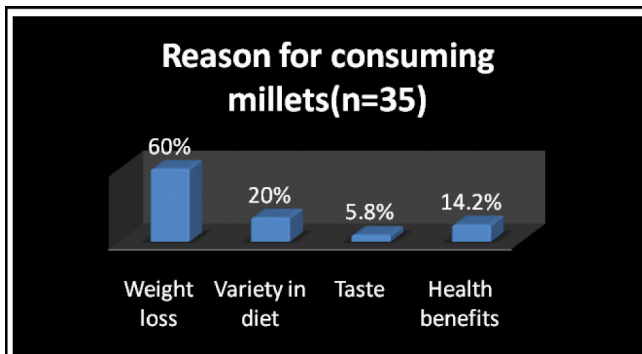


Fig. 3 : Percentage distribution of subjects according to reason for consuming millets

Fig. 4 shows that 66 per cent of subjects sourced millets from online sources. The foremost reason for purchasing them online was ease of ordering and delivery. The other reason identified for online purchase was availability of processed millets based products like cookies, snacks and breakfast premixes.

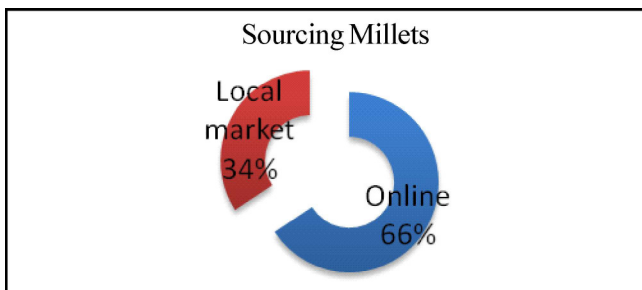


Fig. 4 : Percentage distribution of subjects according to Sourcing of millet for consumption

Fig. 5 shows the consumption pattern of millet based products among subjects. The utilitarian way of consumption is traditional ways of preparing millets where millets are least processed and they are mostly consumed whole. The hedonic ways of consumption means the millet based processed products are consumed which may contain millets in combination with other cereals like in millet based cookies or they might be added in refined form. These products are widely available online and also

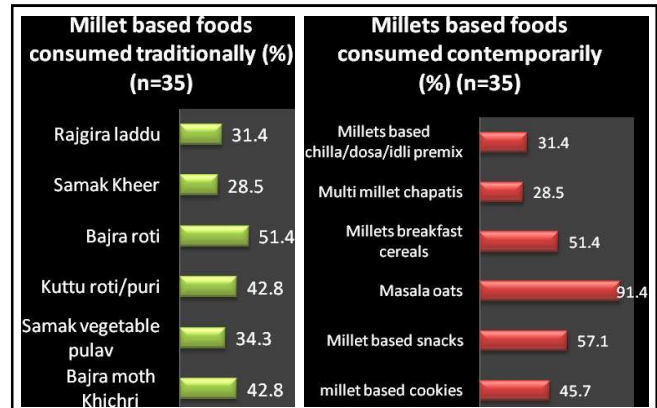


Fig. 5 : Percentage distribution of utilitarian/hedonic consumption of millets

boast various health benefits. About 90 per cent of subjects consumed masala oats which is a refined form of oats and may not contain the benefits of whole oats. About 60 per cent (57.1 %) preferred to consume millet based processed snacks which mostly contain millets in combination with refined flour and also are mostly fried sometimes using palm oil, these products are another form of processed products which have lead to many lifestyle diseases similar risk is foreseen here that consuming such highly processed millet based products may give an illusion of health to the consumer but may not give the benefits of consuming millets in whole form. The reason for adopting this hedonic consumption pattern seems to be the trend of consuming healthy foods among youngsters but lack of skill in cooking the millets at home. Few of participants of this study also admitted to the fact that they have never seen the whole millets like buckwheat, pearl millet, foxtail millet etc. And they can't differentiate one from another. Fig. 6 gives the reason for hedonic

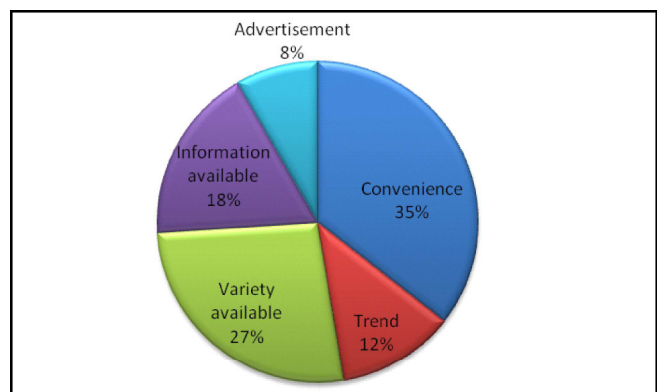


Fig. 6 : Percentage distribution of subjects according to reason for hedonic consumption

consumption the topmost reasons adopting for hedonic way of consumption are convenience and the variety available.

Challenges faced in consuming millets:

When asked about the difficulty in shifting to a millet based diet the leading reason listed by the subjects was difficulty to prepare them. The young homemakers find it difficult to adjust long soaking and cooking times of millets in their daily busy schedule. The other reasons identified during the study were that the subject had to prepare millets for themselves only the whole family does not equally like or adopt these products. Fourteen per cent also admitted that they do not like the taste of these products in comparison to wheat based products Maehle *et al.* (2015) enlisted taste as major factor behind hedonic consumption. The percentage distribution of the challenges faced are given in Fig. 7.

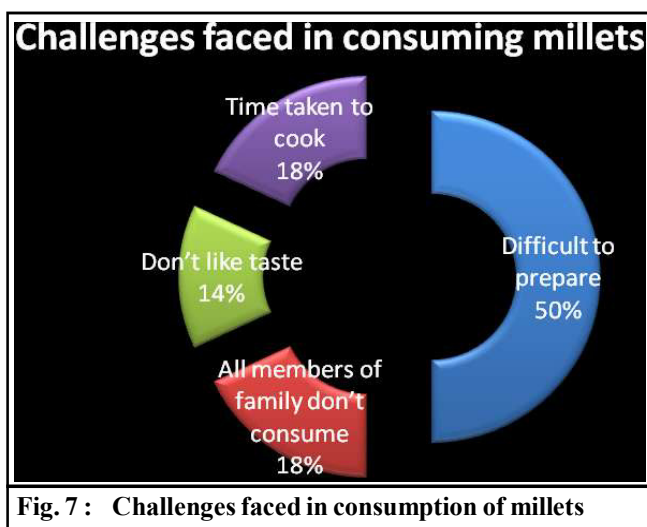


Fig. 7 : Challenges faced in consumption of millets

The role of media in creating shift from utilitarian way to hedonic way highlights that popular social media such as instagram, facebook, whatsapp etc. have played 70 per cent role in giving spotlight to millet consumption benefits and publicizing millets based products and preparation knowhow to today's consumers. News articles also played a major role in this respect followed by conferences and seminars. About 20 per cent of subjects consumed millets on advice of their nutritionist. Consumption behavior change indicates that in coming days the millet consumption is going to increase manifold as more and more people want to improve their health and nutrition status. Though it is important to note that only 17 per cent of consumers went through published

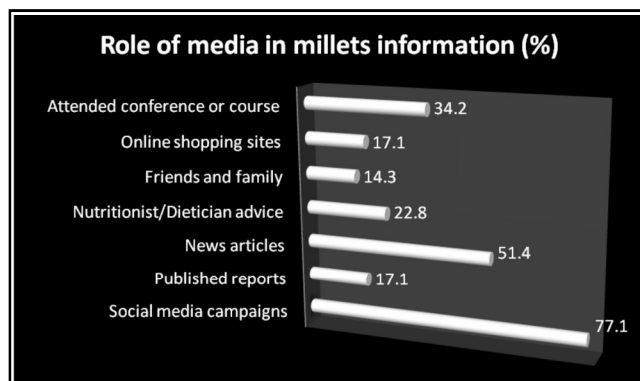


Fig. 8 : Role of media in shifting millet consumption from utilitarian to hedonic

reports most of those who have adopted millets in their diet continue to do so as they want to live a healthy life as well as they now have access to millets based online convenience food available. Papoutsis *et al.* (2021) in their study on functional snacks concluded that only older people are ready to compromise taste over health benefits while hedonic consumption is mostly driven by taste preferences (Fig. 8).

Conclusion:

From the above results we can draw a conclusion that media indeed plays important role in influencing consumer behavior. The humble millets once consumed as staple traditional part of diet are now part of Hedonic consumption where consumers are consciously adoption these in their daily diets to reap health benefits such as weight loss. The consumers are also spending on non conventional foods advertised commercially as they do not have time or skills to prepare millets. Various conferences and courses organized by various institutions have played an important role in creating awareness and motivated people to consume millets. Most of the subjects were influenced by social media and the news articles published about health benefits and recipes shared over various channels. Approximately one fifth of subjects were consuming millets as their nutritionist suggested them to do so. People prefer to use online platform to order and to find millet based convenience foods. This behavior indicates that there will be a positive trend in millet consumption which might lead to surge in demand of millet based products. The social media is a powerful tool if used to its full potential can open doors for great entrepreneurial success in millet based products manufacturing and distribution. Kumar *et al.* (2020)

suggested that better campaign should be designed to alter consumer behavior and there is a need to develop consumer interest to bring about millets back as staples in Indian diet. Thus it is concluded that if the trend is allowed to go as is the newly formed interest in the area of millets consumption the modern processed foods might take over the traditional ways but the health aspects might not be met satisfactorily. The need of the hour is to create easy recipes to incorporate millets in daily diet and making available whole millet based convenience foods to attract young consumers.

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