

Leveraging Social Media Marketing Strategies for Millet-Based Ready-to-Eat Products: A Competitive Analysis

ABSTRACT

By 2019-20, the amount of millet consumed directly decreased to 10.72 MMT. It declined with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 2.45 per cent during 2010-11 to 2019-20. This can be attributed to changes in eating choices, especially in rural areas. In India, e-commerce is the primary distribution channel for value-based millet products, accounting for over 50 per cent of consumption in urban areas. Millets are a staple grain in many Asian and African countries, where they are used to produce chakli, dosa, papad, idly, porridges, breads and snacks for young children. 97 per cent of millets are grown in underdeveloped countries, primarily by marginal and low-resource farmers. India is the world's largest producer of millet, followed by Nigeria, Niger, and China. The major import markets are Indonesia, Germany, Belgium, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates. RTE food's global market size reached USD 181.5 billion in 2023. The research expects this market to reach USD 262.4 billion by 2032, with a CAGR of 4.18 per cent. Marketing should be focused 80 per cent on the consumer's information and education, and only 20 per cent on the sales growth. The firm to expand its market, is planning to increase its presence in gated communities and is also keen on exploring the different opportunities through food on-wheels concept. Hence, market analysis was helpful for the firm in deciding the marketing strategies it needs to employ and the kind of market segments it can serve.

Keywords: Consumer awareness; Consumer behaviour; Consumption pattern; Social media marketing; Ready-to-eat foods.

1. INTRODUCTION

The physiological needs for human survival are food, clothing and shelter. These necessities are often the "three pillars of survival" and are fundamental for sustaining life and ensuring basic human dignity. The word 'food' refers to the chemical substances taken into the body to keep the body in a healthy and active condition [1]. Over time there has been a notable shift in consumer preferences from simply viewing food as a basic necessity to prioritizing nutritious food choices. In India, the majority of the population consumes homemade food. Nevertheless, consumption of branded and non-branded processed food is increasing due to an increase in urbanization. Rising health consciousness among urban youth may lead to an increased interest in consuming millets as a direct food source in the coming years. Millets are one of the major and oldest food, and it has a long history dating back to ancient civilization. India is ranked as the top millet producer in the world, underscoring the vital role of millet as a food source and income for millions in India. India's landscape also supported millet cultivation. The early Indian farmers chose millets for various reasons such as their nutritional content, resilience to sustain climate conditions, ease of cultivation due to minimal water and fertilizer requirements, and versatility in preparing various dishes [2]. Millets are one of the ancient grains, but now they are available in modern forms of Ready-to-Cook (RTC) and Ready-to-Eat (RTE) food products as there is a radical shift in consumer behaviour towards healthier food habits with the increasing lifestyle diseases, triggering consciousness of health, nutrition and fitness [3]. New millets-based food products from start-ups and (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) FMCGs are expected to gain popularity in the coming year. Demand in urban and semi-urban areas is expected to increase by 20.01 per cent between 2019-20 and 2029-30 [4]. RTE food global market size reached USD 181.5 billion in 2023. The research expects this market to reach USD 262.4 billion by 2032, with a CAGR of 4.18 per cent [5]. To successfully market RTE millet products, one must create a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) that promotes them as a practical and healthy decision. Social media marketing strategies are an emerging trend in the

startup ecosystem, based on these shifts in marketing trends. With the following goals in mind, this study has been conducted to analyse the use of social media marketing strategies adopted by the competitors of startups.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study required the collection of data from Hyderabad, Gachibowli and Sainikpuri localities, as the selected firm is keen on expanding its market in these areas, in which the products are premiumly placed. About the availability of various brands of RTE products, six supermarkets and 10 retailers were selected for collecting the data based on convenient sampling methods from Gachibowli, Sainikpuri, Chenginchera, Nampally and Uppal areas. Primary data was collected from retailers, supermarkets and major social media platforms. The relevant secondary data was collected from research papers, websites, articles, books, journals, newsletters and government records.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected has been analyzed and tabulated using appropriate descriptive statistical data like mean, simple averages and percentages. The data about the profile of the company of competitors and competitive analysis of social media marketing strategies used by the firms is tabulated in Table no. 1 and Table no. 2 respectively. Analysis of social media platform usage is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Table 1. Profile of Start-up competitors in the millet market.

Profile of the company	Ancient foods India	Hektapy	Troo Good	Millet amma	Health sutra
In-corporated Year	2021	2021	2018	2017	2013
Type of ownership	Private Limited Company	Private Limited Company	Private Limited Company	Private Limited Company	Private Limited Company
Location	Hyderabad	Bengaluru	Hyderabad	Bengaluru	Hyderabad
Founder	Dr. Lakshmi Haritha Bhavani	Swarupa Rani Basani & Vijay Bhasker Reddy Basani	Raju Bhupati	Indra Devi Bhuwalka & Ruchika Bhuwalka	Sai Krishna Popuri
Kind of Products	Millet-RTE & RTC, Karam podi, Pickles, Cold pressed oils, etc.	Millet-RTE, Jam, Ghee, Honey, Coffee, Masala mixes, etc.	Millet-RTE	Millet-RTE & RTC, Cooking oils, Spices, etc.	Millet-RTE & RTC.
Millet-RTE products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millet cookies, Millet laddus, Millet murukku. 	Millet cookies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millet cookies, Millet chikki, Millet rusk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millet cookies, Millet laddus, Millet khakhra, Millet chivda, Millet lavash. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Millet cookies, Millet namkeen.
Product availability in e-commerce platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company website WhatsApp Amazon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company website Amazon Meesho 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company site Amazon Flipkart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company site Amazon Flipkart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company site Amazon Flipkart

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipkart • Jio mart • Mystore-ONDC • Minify • Shopify • Aarogyamastu • Mirchi.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myniwa • Distacart • Trendia foods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bigbasket • India Mart • The millet bazaar • Tryitfirst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jio mart • Meesho • India mart • Nature's soul • You Care Lifestyle • Indian swad • Kreate • Crude origins 2 • Organic Mandya • Khojle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bigbasket • Jio mart • India Mart • Grain Culture • Mirchi.com • Nutra C • Vell tree • Trendiafoods • Mall2Mart
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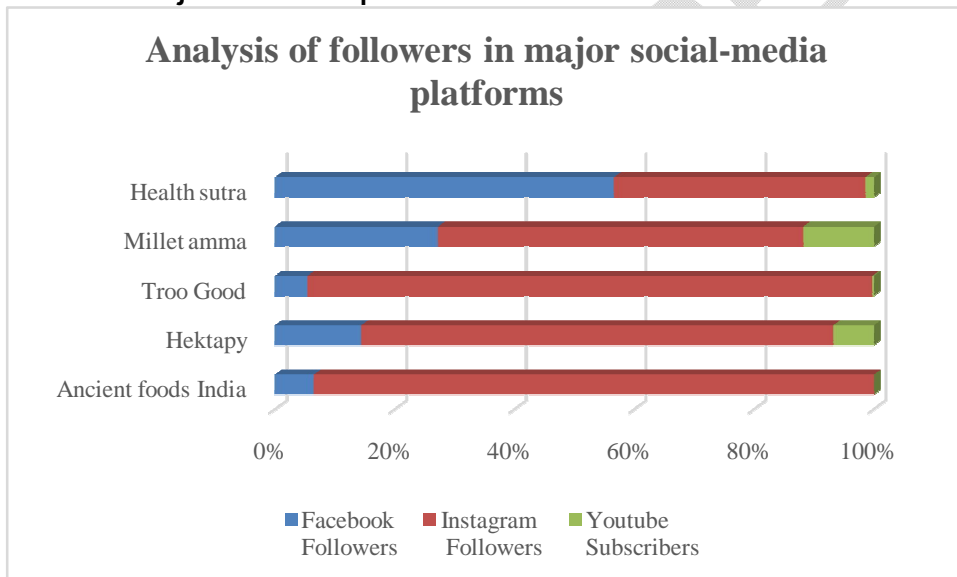
Table 2. Competitive analysis of social media marketing strategies used by the firms.

Category	Ancient foods India	Hektapy	Troo Good	Millet amma	Health sutra
Social media platforms used by the firm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website • Facebook • Instagram • Threads • LinkedIn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website • Facebook • Instagram • Youtube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website • Facebook • Instagram • Youtube • Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website • Facebook • Instagram • Youtube • LinkedIn • Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website • Facebook • Instagram • Youtube • Twitter
Type of account (Business account/ User account)	Business account	Business account	Business account	Business account	Business account
Type of feed in various social media platforms	Posts, Videos & Reels.	Posts, Reels, Videos & Shorts.	Posts, Reels & Videos.	Posts, Reels, Stories, Videos & shorts.	Posts, Reels & Videos.
Type of content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products • Promotional meetings attended • Festival greeting posts • News articles regarding firm • Review posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products • Festival greeting posts • Recipe posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising of products • Product making • Awareness posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products • Recipe posts • Awareness programmes conducted • Testimonials • Health benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products • Festival greeting posts • Recipe posts • Awareness posts • Testimonials • Product review posts
Returns/ Refund policy	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Influencers/ Collaborations	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Frequency of posts	Occasionally	Frequently	Frequently	Always	Rarely
Interacting with the customers	Never	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Rarely

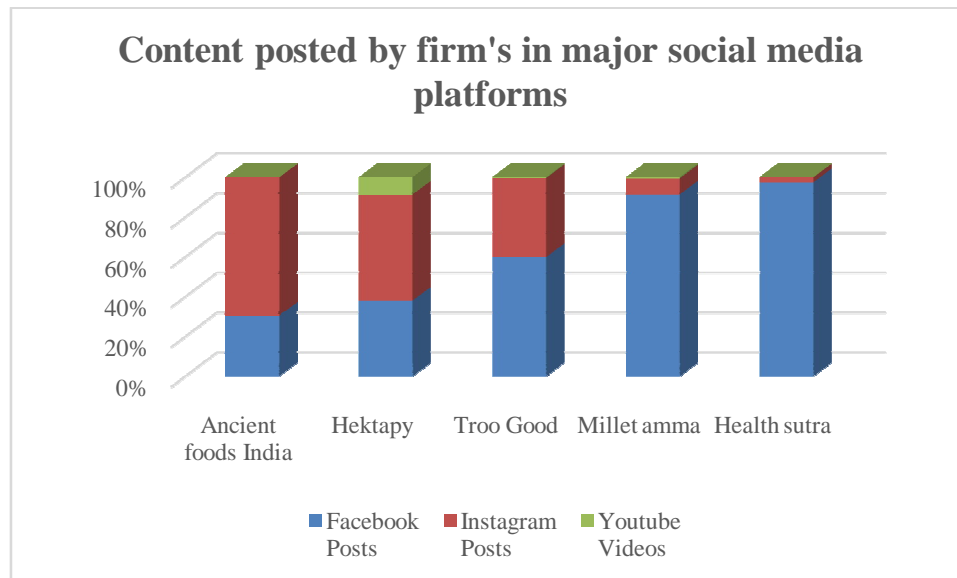
The table compares social media usage and interaction strategies across five brands: Ancient Foods India, Hektapy, Troo Good, Millet Amma, and Health Sutra. All brands use several social media sites, the most common of which are Instagram and Facebook. Most brands establish business accounts and focus on publishing a variety of content such as products, recipes, and awareness statements. Troo Good, Millet Amma, and Health Sutra participate in influencer collaborations, with Millet Amma posting the most regularly. In contrast, Ancient Foods India and Health Sutra post less frequently and do not offer returns or refunds. Customer interaction is negligible across all brands, except Millet Amma, which experiences occasional engagement.

Figure 1. Analysis of followers in major social-media platforms



The graph depicts the distribution of followers on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for five brands: Health Sutra, Millet Amma, Troo Good, Hektapy, and Ancient Foods India. Instagram followers dominate all brands, indicating a high preference for this channel. Facebook followers are substantial, but typically fewer than Instagram followers for each firm. YouTube has the fewest subscribers, indicating a lower focus or following on this channel. Notably, Millet Amma and Troo Good have the most YouTube subscribers compared to the others. Overall, it indicates that Instagram is the most effective channel for these firms' follower engagement.

Figure 2. Content posted by firms on major social media platforms



The graph depicts the content distribution across Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for five brands: Ancient Foods India, Hektapy, Troo Good, Millet Amma, and Health Sutra. Facebook posts and Instagram posts make up the vast majority of all brand content. Ancient Foods India posts more on Instagram than Facebook, although Hektapy and Health Sutra share a combination of both. Troo Good and Millet Amma also share a substantial amount of their stuff on Instagram. YouTube videos account for the least share of content across all companies, showing a weaker emphasis on video content than posts on other platforms.

4. CONCLUSION

The study identifies various social media strategies and engagement levels among five millet-based brands: Ancient foods India, Hektapy, Troo Good, Millet Amma, and Health Sutra. Instagram has emerged as the primary medium for follower interaction, with all firms heavily leveraging it alongside Facebook. Content comprises mostly of posts, reels, and videos, with Youtube videos accounting for a lesser share of their social media activity. Millet Amma stands out due to its regular updates and occasional customer interactions, whereas Ancient foods India and Health sutra have less frequent postings and customer contact. Troo Good, Millet Amma, and Health Sutra all benefit from influencer collaborations, which help them promote their products. Regardless of strategy, Instagram's effectiveness as a crucial engagement medium is consistent across all brands, emphasizing its value in social media marketing efforts.

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- 3.

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