Examining the Potentiality of Growth of Fusion Cuisine in Meerut

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Abstract - **Growing popularity of travel trade business in India has tremendously influenced food and beverage industry. In addition, new era generation's inclination towards outing for lunch and dinner has also leveraged food industry. Fusion foods, having unique characteristics of its kind, are gaining popularity, in terms of flavor, taste, design and consumption, as well. Hence, the purpose of the present research is to investigate the future of fusion cuisines in Meerut. Outcomes of the research work reveal that there are lots of fusion dishes already flourishing and being served in food outlets of Meerut city. Moreover, people's demand for these fusion cuisines is also high. The fusion cuisines having local, regional, national and international flavor are liked and consumed by the residents of Meerut city. Appropriate strategies, in terms of planning, promotion, creation of new innovative fusion dishes and people awareness programs need to be adopted, so that fusion cuisines scope in Meerut city can be more broaden and escalated.**

Index Terms - **Fusion Cuisines, Cuisines of Uttar Pradesh, Promotion of Tourism and Hospitality, & Foods in Meerut City.**

INTRODUCTION

Food, as one of the indispensable consumable elements for the human survival on the earth, are prepared in a variety of styles with different taste, tang, and flavor, along-with cultural essence of that particular region, across the globe. From the yore to today's world, food preparation and consumption patterns have tremendously changed. Globalization, advancement in gastronomy, increased international movements within and across the borders and rapid growth in overseas tourist traffic have played a pivotal role in diversifying transformation and consumption patterns of foods.

Food, in terms of fusion cuisine, has a recent origin since 1970s *(Robert, 1985)*, and can be defined as '*innovative new forms of cuisine which combines different elements of culinary traditions, originated from different country, region or culture'*. In general, fusion food is the combination of various form of cooking style mixed with diverse range of food ingredients *(Hall & Mitchell, 2003)*, while preparing a new dish. For example, East Asian Cuisine, European cuisine, and South-western American cuisine, *etc.*, more specifically, ethnic cuisine, Italian Cuisine, French cuisine, Chinese cuisine, Japanese cuisine and Korean cuisine, *etc.* In the other way, foods, basically based on a specific culture, when prepared using ingredients and flavors inherent to another culture *(Singh & Singh, 2007),* are also termed as fusion cuisine, *e.g.*, *Taco Pizza - Pizza with pepper jack cheese, refried beans and salsa,* and *cheese & salsa with Spanish rice, etc.*

Human being bestowed with intrinsic urge of creativity has exploited their cooking skills in developing new fusion dishes by employing combination of different dishes around the globe to give a unique blend. Indeed, the fact remains that invention and innovation in fusion cuisines are caused of the conscious activities of preparing new dishes, performed by the professional cooks, celebrity chefs and cooking passionate *(Leschziner, 2015).*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Indian Context
Foods, in Indian context, have always been a matter of pride and splendor from ancient period to the modern time. The spectacular differences in Indian cuisine can always be seen in different part of India. Though, in terms of ingredients, flavor, taste and cooking styles, each region of India is very rich in cuisines and

produced a large variety of food items, it can particularly be experienced, more than ever, in South Indian cuisines and North Indian cuisines *(Morrison, 2016)*. The new creation and advancement in Indian cuisine got gradual momentum and patronage during various dynasties prevailed in different part of India.

Influence of Foreign Invaders on Indian Food

The advent of foreign invaders who later ruled the nation influenced Indian gastronomy to the great extent, and attributed to the beginning of mixed cuisine fashion through producing blended food products with different culture of the world *(Sen, 2004)*. The great contribution to this effect goes to the Muslim rulers, predominantly, to the Mughals, who were highly inspired with their own culture and Indian gastronomy *(Nandy, 2004)*. Cuisines of that period are still consumed a lot and also popularized among the Indians. Later on, the Europeans, who ruled over 300 years on India, got success in amalgamation of their native food products with the Indian food outlets, restaurants and kitchen food items *(Sen, 2004)*. Consequently, these food items consisting foreign cultures were adopted by the Indians during the span of time. Thus, it can rightly be said that fusion cuisine culture sprout during these periods, in India.

Influence of Modern Age

Interestingly, gradually being advanced and convenient transportation system *(airlines, railways and road network)*, on-hands internet browsing skills, television and growing popularity of travel and tourism have mitigated the cultural distances gap. As a result, gastronomy lovers, especially hospitality professionals and cookery passionate, in order to attract prospective customers to their restaurants, started new inventions and innovations *(Barrère, Bonnard, & Chossat, 2009)*, in terms of making new dishes which look like exclusively traditional dishes but different in taste, flavor and ingredients, also called as *Fusion Cuisine*. India is well known for making diverse range of fusion cuisines. Initially, the professional Chefs of top category hotels of India explored fusion food recipes, as their knowledge of regional and international cuisines enabled them to experiment with multiple dishes *(Povey, 2011)*. Later on, such experiments also occurred in fine dining restaurants and food trucks too. Chefs at best restaurants in Jaipur say *"The fusion food recipes served at multiple restaurants are the best way to travel to multiple cultures while being in your city"* (Meraaki Kitchen, 2019).

Indian food is a popular choice of fusion cuisine for people who look for a combination of flavors in their meal. The taste of the Indian fusion cuisine contains the history, story, and a hint of the lifestyle of the cultures preparing it *(Ellementry, 2021)*. For example, the famous Gujarati snacks in the cuisine include dishes like Dhokla, Jalebi, Farsan and Thepla, which show their community's love to make sweet recipes. Likewise, the spicy North Indian dishes like Paneer Tikka Masala, which served with an Indian flat-bread like Roti or Naan, reflects the glamorously hot lifestyle of the North Indians *(Ellementry, 2021)*. We can rightly say that from the famous Bengali sweets to the nutritious South Indian food, Indian cuisine absorbs the flavors of many cultures before becoming amazingly popular one (*Ellementry, 2021*).

In general, Indian fusion cuisines can be segregated in two broad categories, Indian fusion foods and international fusion foods. All sorts of Indian fusion foods, particularly south Indian cuisines and north Indian cuisines collectively form the category of Indian fusion cuisines, whereas, a combination of Chinese, French, Mexican with Indian cuisines come under international fusion cuisines category. Foods from these two categories are widely loved by Indians due to its uniqueness.

Present Scenario of Fusion Food

At present, India has been a treasure trove in producing a large range of fusion foods with diversified taste and flavors. Now, fusion food recipes are available in all sorts of meal, like, drinking items, appetizers, main course and desserts. Increasing trends of outing for dinner and restaurant culture in Indian new generations has profoundly influenced in gaining popularity of Indian fusion cuisines having local, regional or international flavors. The craziness for fast/fusion foods among Indians can be seen at every big city, especially in metropolitan cities. Some types of fusion cuisines, with example, have given in the below the table - 1.

Table - 1
Types of Indian Fusion Meals

Indian Fusion Drinks	Indian Fusion Appetizers	Indian Fusion Desserts	Indian Fusion Main Course
- Gulkand Strawberry Milkshake - Jamun Shots - Paan Shots - Milk Soda - Lemon Drop Shots - Watermelon mint & Lime Slushie - Thandai Rabdi - Krupatti Coffee - Raspberry Shikanji - Firni Falooda Trifles	- Mexican Samosa - Teriyaki Chicken Hearts - Chinese Chicken Cutlet - Twisted Chicken Puff Pastry - Mini Chicken Puff Pizza - Elephant Foot Yam - Methi Muthiya - Cheesy Football Chicken - Cheesy Chicken Half Moons - Tandoori Paneer Pakoda	- Vermicelli Custard or Semiya Custard Falooda - Anjeer-Gulkand Delight - Carrot Fudge cups filled with ice-cream - Rasmalai Tres Leches Cake - Quinoa Apple Kheer - Malai Sandwich - Avocado Kalakand - Ras Malai Cake - Apple Jalebi with Gulab ice-cream - Turmeric Ice-cream	- Saffron Chicken Tikka - Palak Paneer Cheese Dosa - Pineapple coconut cashew rice - Chilli Paneer Vegetarian Wrap - Tikka Masala Mac and Cheese - Mushroom Masala Curry with coconut - Roti Vegetable Lasagna - Chinese Pakoda - Tandoori Tikka naan Pizza - Bisibelabath
Source: tastedrecipes.com			

Though, there a lot of fusion foods, either having local or regional flavors or international flavors are consumed by Indians, some more than often demanded fusion foods have been identified like, Vegetable Manchurian, Chilli Potato, Pink Sauce Pasta, Tadka Fussily, Masala Coke, Gulab Jamun Cheese Cake, Chilli Chicken, Naanza, Paneer Tacos, Bhel Puri Waffle Cone, Hakka Noodles, Tandoori Momos, Noodle Samosa, Tandoori Chicken Sushi and Rice Cake, *etc.*

Cuisines in Uttar Pradesh
The food culture is a notable part of the state's identity. Uttar Pradesh, in terms of cuisine, is as diverse as its geography. Uttar Pradesh's vibrant culture and living is equally matched in its love for food. From time immemorial, it has absorbed and adapted a variety of cuisines to create an entire smorgasbord of wonderful dishes. The traditions of making a variety of foods have greatly been influenced by historical consequences as various dynasties left their cuisine culture which have now perfectly mixed with local culinary system. The Mughalai food tradition has put a strong influence on the cuisine culture of Uttar Pradesh *(www.culturalindia.net)*. The three step meal system *i.e. beginning with starter, then main course* and *at last, accompaniment,* with an elaborative dining arrangement can be seen in a typical Mughalai meal. Mughalai Cuisine is attributed to distinctive taste with diverse flavors that can range from mild to very spicy *(Sahuliyar, 2008).* Awadhi food tradition is known for 'Dum Pukht' method of food preparation, where food cooked over slow fire in a huge pot (handi) until started releasing the flavor of every ingredient *(Singh Kalra & Gupta, 1986)*. Rice, cheese and mutton form the three main ingredients that are popularly cooked this way.

Cuisines from other Indian states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab and local street foods, along with international cuisines such as European, American, Chinese, Korean, Thai and Japanese, international fast food chains like Barista, Costa Cafe, KFC, McDonald's, Papa John's and Pizza Hut are all part of state's food fashion.
Meerut, one of the oldest and famous city for contribution in Indian freedom fight *(www.meerut.nic.in),* is now located in NCR (National Capital Region) region of India, just 75km away from nation's capital, in Uttar Pradesh state. Though, not known for tourist movement, its proximity with capital region of the country and other states influences a lot. Consequently, a good number of accommodation establishments, restaurants and street food stalls are popular among residents and commuters where they enjoy a variety of foods, in order to fulfill their hungriness. Hence, the purpose of the present research work is to investigate the potentiality of growth of fusion cuisines that are popular and served in the restaurants and food outlet establishments in Meerut.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive in nature, which seek to discover the scope of consumption of fusion cuisine in Meerut city of Uttar Pradesh state, located near the capital region of India. In order to know the

background of the study various books, research papers and relevant websites were explored. A very confined information were collected through secondary data, as research work on gastronomy in India, especially in Uttar Pradesh, are not much conducted. Hence, a preliminary survey of study field did by the scholar to get overview of the types of cuisines served in food outlets of Meerut city. Further, extensive survey took place during accomplishing the present research work.

Questionnaire Formation
A close ended structured questionnaire was designed meant to get authentic and genuine data from food outlets and restaurants personnel. Ten questionnaires were administered, as pilot test, to check relevancy, understandability of questions and consistency. While preparing questionnaire advices were also taken from senior faculty, friends working in restaurants and also to the customers. Thus, after scrutinizing all the responses and modifications advised by experts a final set of questionnaire well drafted for collecting empirical data. The final draft of questionnaire was incorporated three sections. First and second was in nominal scale and third section in ordinal scale.

Sampling
Simple random stratified sample technique was adopted for collecting sample data. The whole Meerut city was divided into 5 sections and 20 samples from hotel restaurants and other well established restaurants of each section were collected. Attempt was made to administer the questionnaire at the spot. Maximum questionnaires except nine were filled up by the respondents instantly, while nine were collected next day. Thus, total 80 questionnaires were further applied for analysis and interpretation.

Research Techniques applied for Analysis of Data
Since, present research work is of descriptive nature, frequency distribution and descriptive statistics techniques were implemented. Mena value, standard deviation, formula were used in analyzing the empirical data. SPSS 20 version software was used for analysis of encoding, tabulating, decoding and interpreting the results. Missing values were also incorporated using mean value addition technique through SPSS software.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

A total 80 sample data were collected from the restaurants located in 5 different regions of Meerut City. Out of 80 food outlets, 4 outlets provide only vegetarian foods and remain 76 provide both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods. A result can be derived from here that maximum number of customers of Meerut city likes to enjoy non-vegetarian foods.

In order to know the age group of customers who preferred eating fusion cuisines, customers were divided into equal group intervals. Data given in table - 2 clearly illustrates that 65% of the customers who demands fusion cuisines belong to the age group between 30-50years, followed by 20-30years (20%), 50-60years (10%) and above 60years (5%) only.

Table – 2 Age-group of customers come to your restaurant for food and beverage purpose (1, 2, 3, order)		
Age – Group	Frequency	Percent
20-30 Years	16	20%
30-40 Years	24	30%
40-50 Years	28	35%
50-60 Years	08	10%
Above 60 Years	4	05%

There are a variety of fusion cuisines served in Indian restaurants, particularly in Uttar Pradesh restaurants. Since, Meerut is on very close proximity to Delhi, attempt was made to identify fusion cuisines served in NCR region of India, and whether, they are provided in Meerut restaurants. In this regard, a list of fusion cuisines was prepared and asked to the restaurant managers whether they provide these fusion cuisines to their customers.

Table – 3 Responses of Food Outlet Personnel on Fusion Dishes availability in the Food Outlets of Meerut City					
S.N.	Fusion Dishes	No. of Respondents (Yes)		No. of Respondents (No)	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1.	Vegetable Manchurian	80	100%	0	0%
2.	Chili Potato	79	98.75%	1	1.25%%
3.	Pink Sauce Pasta	76	95%	4	5%
4.	Tadka Fussily	3	3.75%	77	96.25%
5.	Masala Cake	71	12.25%	9	77.75%

6.	Gulab Jamun Cheese Cake	2	2.5%	78	97.5%
7.	Chili Chicken	73	91.25%	7	8.75%
8.	Naan Pizza	61	76.25%	19	23.75%
9.	Paneer Tacos	58	72.5%	22	27.5%
10.	Bhel Puri Waffle Cone	5	6.25%	75	93.75%
11.	Chinese Dosa	3	3.75%	77	96.25%
12.	Chinese Pakoda	4	5%	76	95%
13.	Chili Paneer vegetarian Wrap	55	68.75%	25	11.25%
14.	Saffron Chicken Tikka	72	90%	8	10%
15.	Mini Chicken Puff Pizza	12	15%	68	85%
16.	Chinese Chicken Cutlet	75	93.75%	5	6.25%
17.	Thandai Rabdi	3	3.75%	77	96.25%
18.	Fried Rice	77	96.25%	3	3.75%
19.	Idli Shambhar	11	13.75%	69	86.25%
20.	Kababs	46	57.5%	34	42.5%
21.	Falafal Rolls	43	8.75%	37	91.25%
22.	Hakka Noodles	64	80%	16	20%
23.	Tandoori Momos	53	66.25%	27	33.75%
24.	Noodle Samosa	9	11.25%	71	88.75%
25.	Tandoori Chicken Sushie	22	27.5%	58	72.5%
26.	Rice Cake	15	18.75%	65	81.25%
27.	Pav Bhaji Pasta	63	78.75%	17	21.25%
28.	Jalapeno Stuffed Cheese Kachori	02	2.5%	78	97.5%
29.	Indo-Mexican Rice	01	1.25%	79	98.75%
30.	Tandoori Pizza	12	15%	68	85%
31.	Idli Burger	08	10%	72	90%
32.	Tandoori Tikka Naan Pizza	03	3.75%	77	96.25%
33.	Mushroom Masala Curry	75	64.75%	05	15.25%
34.	Palak Paneer Cheese Dosa	28	35%	52	65%
35.	Cheesy Chicken Half Moon	05	6.25%	75	93.75%
36.	Twisted Chicken Puff Pastry	61	76.25%	19	23.75%
37.	Mexican Samosa	02	2.5%	78	97.5%
38.	Gulkand Strawberry Milkshake	00	0%	80	100%
39.	Chowmein	78	97.5%	02	2.5%
40.	Kathi Rolls	64	80%	16	20%
41.	Pasta Rolls	72	90%	08	10%
42.	Noodle Rolls	51	63.75%	29	36.25%
Source: Primary Data					

The table - 3 demonstrates the types of fusion cuisines provided in Meerut restaurants and food outlets. On the basis of the information extracted from the above given table, we can say that except one fusion food *i.e., Gulkand Strawberry Milkshake*, all the other fusion dishes mentioned in the table - 3 are served in the restaurants and food outlets located in Meerut city.

The feedback (Table - 3) received from the restaurants and food outlet personnel of Meerut City, it can obviously be said that there are some popular fusion cuisines that maximum food service providing establishments served to their customers. Fusion dishes like 'Vegetable Manchurian' served in maximum food outlets (100%) of Meerut city, followed by Chili Potato *(98.75% food outlets)*; Chowmein *(97.5% food outlets)*; Fried Rice *(96.25%*

food Outlets); Pink Sauce Pasta *(95% food Outlets);* Chinese Chicken Cutlets *(93.75% food outlets);* Chili Chicken *(91.25% food Outlets);* Pasta Rolls *(90% food Outlets);* Saffron Chicken Tikka *(90% food Outlets);* Kathi Rolls *(80% food Outlets);* Hakka Noodles *(80% food outlets);* Pav Bhaji Pasta *(78.75% outlets);* Naan Pizza *(76.25% food Outlets);* Twisted Chicken Puff Pastry *(76.25% food Outlets);* Paneer Tacos *(72.5% food outlets);* Chili Paneer vegetarian wrap *(68.75% food outlets);* Tandoori Momos *(66.25% food Outlets);* Mushroom Masala Curry *(64.75% food Outlets);* Noodle Rolls *(63.75% food Outlets)* and Kababs *(57.5% food Outlets).*

The other fusion cuisines mentioned in table - 3 are obviously less popular among the Meerut residents as they are served only in the very few number of food

outlets, ranges from 1.25% to 35% of a total 80 sample food outlets.

Descriptive statistics technique was used to analyze the customers demand for fusion dishes while eating at food outlets of Meerut city. Responses were collected in 5 point likert scale (1 - very less demanded to 5 - very high demanded) from restaurants and outlets personnel. Mean value greater than 3 refers to high demand of the food products.

Table – 4 Responses of Food Outlet Personnel on Customers' Demand for Fusion Foods					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Manchurian Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	3	5	4.03	.274
Chili Potato Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	3	5	4.90	.341
Pink Sauce Pasta Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.79	.724
Chili Chicken Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.73	.826
Naan Pizza Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	4	3.79	.671
Paneer Tacos Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.68	.927
Chili Paneer Vegetarian Wrap Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	2	5	4.84	.587
Saffron/Red Chicken Tikka Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.73	.868
Cheese Chicken Cutlet Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.80	.766
Fried Rice Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.86	.615
Kababs Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.79	.741
Hakka Noodles Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.89	.531
Tandoori Momos Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.78	.762
Pav Bhaji Pasta Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	2	5	3.87	.460
Mushroom Masala Curry Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	4	3.84	.583
Palak Paneer Cheese Dosa Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	2	5	4.79	.688
Twisted Chicken Puff Pastry Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	4	3.86	.522
Chowmein Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.76	.799
Kathi Rolls Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.78	.763
Pasta Rolls Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	1	5	4.80	.644
Noodle Rolls Dishes demanded by the customers come to your restaurant.	80	3	5	4.86	.443
Source: Primary Data					

From the data given in table - 4, we can derive information that mean value for demand for all the fusion dishes is greater than 3, ranges from 3.79 to 4.90, which mean, all the food items are highly demanded by the customers. Very less variation in standard deviation also supports the result. It can also be proved in other ways that the fusion food items mentioned in table - 4 are also part of those food items which are served in maximum food outlet establishments in Meerut city (table - 3).

Thus, the result of analyzed data itself describes that various types of fusion cuisines (national/ international) are popular among the residents of Meerut city and are frequently demanded by the customers, when they visit food outlets.

CONCLUSION

Objective of the present research work was to examine, whether fusion cuisines have the possibility of growth in Meerut city. During the preliminary survey of the study area various fusion dishes were found already being served by the restaurants and food outlets to their customers. Subsequently, detailed information on various types of fusion dishes,

national, regional or international, were received through administering structured close ended questionnaire. As a result, various types of fusion cuisines, as listed in Table - 3, are served in many restaurants and food outlets of Meerut city, out of them, some are very popular and some are not. In order to know demand patterns of these fusion dishes data were also received through the same close ended questionnaire. Data received through this section of the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics technique in which value above 3 denotes highly demanded side. Thus, various fusion cuisines for whose mean value was greater than 3, as listed in Table - 4, were identified as much demanded fusion dishes by the customers.

Thus, the outcome of the research work is that various fusion foods are already being served in restaurants and food outlets of Meerut city, and people also like to consume it to satisfy their need. Promotion and marketing strategies need to be implemented in order to create awareness about the fusion foods to the people. If, new innovative fusion foods get a place in food menu of the restaurants and food outlets, it will definitely assist in attracting a new food lover segments and growth of fusion cuisines in Meerut city.

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