RESEARCH ARTICLE

DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER PREFERENCE FOR ARABIAN FOOD IN THE CITY OF PEARLS-HYDERABAD

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study mainly examines the determinants of consumer preference for an upcoming delectable cuisine- Arabian food in the city of Hyderabad. Hyderabad is famous worldwide for its Biryani. But a drastic change has been seen in the preference of consumers from Mughlai cuisine towards Arabian Cuisine. Logistic Regression Model is used to analyze the determinants of consumer preference for Arabian Food. The results of the study indicate that the key demographic variables influencing consumer preference for Arabian food is age, religion, and whether the consumer is a vegetarian or non-vegetarian. The other variables such as marital status, occupation, education and income are also statistically significant. One major result of the study is that the Arabian food seems to appeal more to the younger consumers in the age group 18 – 29 and consumers over 50 years seem to prefer the local regional cuisines. The study suggests that appropriate marketing strategies must be implemented to attract the other market segments as well.

INTRODUCTION

According to Schiffman and Kanuk, "consumer behavior encompasses all of the behaviors that consumers display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs". Food choice is influenced by a wide spectrum of factors, which affect consumer behavior in different ways, resulting in the choice of some specific food and in the rejection of other foods. The study of food choice primarily deals with the one question: "why do people eat the foods they eat?" (Arganini *et al*, 2012). The regular cuisines usually served by most of the hotels in the city of Hyderabad are Mughlai, Persian, Chinese and Continental and of course the local regional cuisines. Lately, the city is developing a taste for cuisine of Gulf countries. Many local people who have visited the Gulf countries either for leisure, employment and pilgrimage purposes have developed a liking for varieties of Arabian foods during their trips and started intruding the various Arabian dishes to their friends and families. As a result, there is a demand for Arabian food and many hotels serving Arabian cuisine are opening up at a brisk pace in different areas of

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Hyderabad (Khan, 2013). *Initially, hotels serving Arabian food opened up in and around the old city of Hyderabad especially Barkas but in recent times many food joints serving Arabian food specialties have opened shop in areas such as Nampally, Tolichowki, Charminar and even in uptown areas like Banjara Hills. These food joints serve Arabic specialties platter comprising items such as mandi, muttabaq, umm ali, khabsa laham* samak al-faham and hummus. Another Arabian food that is quite popular amongst youngsters is Shawarma, that is slowly becoming an alternative to fast food such as pizzas and burgers and is served in many eateries in and around Hyderabad. This delicacy is also relishes by families visiting these eateries and some of the customers go for a take-away. (Afreen, 2014; Shafeeq, 2014). *The pricing of the Arabian food is well within the budget for many customers usually priced between 200 to 500 rupees for a platter. The shawarma is priced between 60 to 75 rupees and is the most widely available Arabian dish in all parts of Hyderabad including the Hitec city, which is an IT hub. Many IT professionals relish this delicious snack (Khan, 2013; Shafeeq, 2014).* Abbeam *et al* (2014) studied the determinants of consumer preference for domestically processes rice using Logit model. Their study found that key variables impacting the consumers preference for domestic rice are age, household size, monthly expenditure on food and taste. Gyau *et al* (2014)

studied the *f*actors affecting consumers' preferences for honey using the logistic regression model, also called the logit model. The consumer characteristics considered were marital status, education, age, gender, occupation, and income levels. The results of their study concluded that consumers who are married and educated up to at least secondary level show strong affinity for local forest and savannah honey and consumers between age group of 30 and 50 prefer imported honey to beekeeping. Naseem *et al*. (2015) analyzed the determinants of consumer preferences for branded or non branded tea in Punjab (Pakistan) using a binary Logit Model. Their study found that low level income consumers preferred non branded tea. The results also found that income, education, consumer loyalty, taste, quality, and advertisement were positively related to the choice of branded tea while price was negative related to the choice of branded tea. Becker-Suttle *et al*. (1994) examined age (seniors and non-seniors) and benefits sought for customers of full-service restaurants, while Shank and Nahhas (1994) compared the dining preferences and behaviors of elder and younger customers for a family restaurant.

Boronico (1999) found that both quality of service and price provided impact on demand for services rendered. Achieving a competitive advantage based on providing outstanding service quality (Headley and Choi, 1992; Lewis, 1989) is a common strategy used by restaurant marketers. Jakˇsa Jack Kivela (1997) identified that while food type and food quality appear to be the most important variables for restaurant selection, ambience or atmosphere, prestige, location, and cost of food, are nevertheless critical in the final selection or rejection process. Moreover ambience, comfort level, and prestige are also differentiated by a combination of the age, occasion, and income segment. Strugnell (1997) focuses on Irish consumers as to why they are becoming more accustomed to ethnic cuisine although traditional meals are popular. This paper focused on consumer attitude towards consumption of chilled ready meals. This study was done in both north and south of Ireland. It was found that consumption of these products is higher in Ireland than in the U.K mainland. The products are often purchased as a convenient alternative or a weekly treat. Respondents in urban locations were significantly more likely to consume chilled ready meals. Kim & Geistfeld (2003) investigated the influence of economic and socio-demographic factors food facility choice for an evening meal. They used a Multinomial logistic regression analysis and the results of the study revealed that income, age, household size, household composition (presence of a young child), urbanization, day of the week, and season of the year affected the choice of a particular foodservice facility for an evening meal. They also observed that demand for evening meals at full-service restaurants is likely to increase due to the aging of "baby boomers," increasing household income, and decreasing household size. They concluded that Quick-service restaurants who wish to survive the competition should consider focusing on the needs of households with young children.

Background and Rationale

Over the past one decade the consumer demand for other cuisines has grown substantially. This study is initiated to gain

an understanding between demographic factors and their impact on consumer preferences for the Arabian cuisine. This study takes an overview of the research that addresses the following questions in relation to consumer's preference for Arabian cuisine.

- Which Age group prefers the Arabian cuisine?
- Is Gender a significant variable?
- Does Occupation has an influence on the consumer's preference?
- Do Income levels have an influence of the consumer's preference?
- Does education have an influence on the consumer's preference?

The present study reviews the literature and collected primary data by using a research instrument on Arabian food preferences from consumers perspectives and analyzes the findings through the application of Logit model (Logistic Regression Model) – which is a method of fitting a regression curve y= f(x) when y is a categorical variable. This model predicts Y for a given set of predictors X. The predictors can be continuous, categorical or a mix of both. In our study, Y is a binary variable meaning that it can assume either the value 1 or 0, where 1 represents preference for Arabian food and 0 represents no preference for Arabian food. In our study, the predictor variables are demographic factors.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine the determinants of consumer preference for Arabian food in the city of Hyderabad.   However, the detailed objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the profile of consumers of delectable Arabian cuisine in Hyderabad
- To study the major demographic factors affecting consumer preferences for Arabian food in Hyderabad.
- To understand the change in epicurean habits of the people of Hyderabad

Research Design

The present study makes use of judicious mix of, both, primary and secondary sources of data that complements the research efforts. Exploratory research design was used to gain insight into the consumption pattern and epicurean habits of people residing in Hyderabad. The various sources of information used were

- Journals and magazines.
- Freelance search using various search engines.

Descriptive research design was used gain insight into the factors for preferring a preferring a particular cuisine. Moreover an attempt was made to gain an insight into the shift in eating habits. The source of information included the consumers who visit the restaurants located in Hyderabad.

Sources of Data: The study makes use of both primary as well as secondary sources of data. The Primary data is collected from consumers who visited the selected restaurants   in

Hyderabad through a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered to 300 customers before and after dining in the selected restaurants. Out of which the researcher could get 278 completely filled questionnaires. The customer questionnaire used contained 2 sections. The first section includes some screening questions to identify the eating habits of people who visits restaurant in Hyderabad. The second section deals with the preferences of consumers for various dishes in the cuisine and the reasons for its preference. In this case the guests were asked to rate at a five point scale of most preferred (5 being most preferred) to not at all preferred (1 being not at all preferred).The second section is related to demographic characteristics of respondents. (Age, gender, level of education etc).Secondary data is collected from different journals of management and hospitality, magazines, newspaper reports etc.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Logit Model

This study employs Logit Model for finding the demographic factors affecting consumers' preferences for Arabian food. In this study, the independent variables are the Age, Gender, Marital Status, Occupation, Income, Education, Religion, category of the consumer whether he or she is Vegetarian or Non-Vegetarian. The dependent variable is consumers prefer Arabian food (Y=1) and consumers do not prefer Arabian food (Y=0). To find the impact of different demographic variables on consumer choice of Arabian food, logit model is estimated, with consumer demographics as explanatory variables.

The logit model takes the following form:

$Y = f\ (\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Age} + \beta_2 \text{Gender} + \beta_3 \text{Marital status} + \beta_4 \text{Occupation} + \beta_5 \text{Income} + \beta_6 \text{Education} + \beta_7 \text{Religion} + \beta_8 \text{Category (Vegetarian or Non-Vegetarian)}$

Where

The dependent variable (Y) in this study represents the probability of the respondents preferring Arabian food

Independent or Explanatory variables

Age: (Age1 < 20 years*, Age2 = 20-29 years, Age3 = 30-39 years, Age4 = 40-49 years, Age5= > 50 years)

Gender: (1=Female, 0 = Male*)

Marital status (MS): (1= Single, 0 = Married*)

Occupation: (OCC1 = Business*, OCC2 = Private Salaried, OCC3=Government, OCC4 = Student)

Income: (I1 = less than 10,000*, I2= 10,000 – 20,000, I3 = greater than 20,000)

Education: (E1 = Post Graduation and above*, E2 = Graduate, E3 = Undergraduate)

Religion: (R1=Islam*, R2=Hinduism, R3=Christianity, R4 = Other)

Category: (Vegetarian = 1, Non-Vegetarian = 0*)
* represents the reference group

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Less than 20 years	36	13%
20-29	89	32%
30-39	72	26%
40-49	53	19%
> 50 years	28	10%
Gender		
Male	190	68%
Female	88	32%
Marital Status		
Unmarried	108	39%
Married	170	61%
Occupation		
Business	89	32%
Private Salaried employee	58	21%
Government employee	50	18%
Student	81	29%
Monthly Income level		
Less than 10,000	81	29%
10,000 – 20,000	64	23%
Greater than 20,000	133	48%
Education		
Post Graduation and above	58	21%
Graduation	97	35%
Under graduation	123	44%
Religion		
Islam	98	35%
Hinduism	83	30%
Christianity	64	23%
Others	33	12%
Category		
Vegetarian	81	29%
Non-Vegetarian	197	71%

The result in table 1 lists the demographic profile of the sample respondents. Majority of the respondents (68%) are males while the remaining 32%% are females. Most of the respondents were in the age group of 20-29 (32%) followed by 26% in the age group of 30-39. The respondents in the age group of greater than 50 years represent only about 10%. Most of the respondents (44%) were undergraduates closely followed by graduates who represent around 35% and those who possessed post graduate degree and above representing about 21%. Most of the respondents were businessmen (32%) followed by students representing 29% of the sample and remaining 39% of the respondents comprised of private and government employees. Majority of respondents belong to the higher income group of monthly income greater than 20,000 (48%) and the lower and middle income groups together represent 52%. About 35% of the respondents are Muslims, Hindus comprise 30%, Christians represent 23% and the rest 12% of respondents belonged to other religions. About 71% of the respondents were non-vegetarians and 29% of the respondents were vegetarians. Majority (61%) of the respondents were married while 39% of them were unmarried.

Table 2. Logit Model on Consumer demographic factors as determinants of preference for Arabian Food

	Coefficient	Std. Error	z	p-value	
const	2.64848	1.15037	2.3023	0.02132	**
Age2	-1.07624	0.718206	-1.4985	0.13400	
Age3	-1.93708	0.948736	-2.0417	0.04118	**
Age4	-1.6586	0.973333	-1.7040	0.08837	*
Age5	-2.87691	0.999212	-2.8792	0.00399	***
Gender	-0.174093	0.390595	-0.4457	0.65581	
MS	1.75108	0.515875	3.3944	0.00069	***
OCC2	-1.15242	0.466344	-2.4712	0.01347	**
OCC3	-1.28011	0.473401	-2.7041	0.00685	***
OCC4	1.85609	0.752333	2.4671	0.01362	**
I2	-1.00304	0.499645	-2.0075	0.04470	**
I3	-1.77462	0.39783	-4.4608	<0.00001	***
E2	0.847885	0.514538	1.6479	0.09938	*
E3	2.43454	0.482952	5.0410	<0.00001	***
R2	-1.18548	0.440355	-2.6921	0.00710	***
R3	-1.32791	0.459487	-2.8900	0.00385	***
R4	-1.02637	0.468471	-2.1909	0.02846	**
V1	-3.51328	0.492207	-7.1378	<0.00001	***

Mean dependent var	0.563452	S.D. dependent var	0.496588
McFadden R-squared	0.401472	Adjusted R-squared	0.334785
Log-likelihood	-61.5541	Akaike criterion	359.1082
Schwarz criterion	430.6825	Hannan-Quinn	387.4694

Number of cases 'correctly predicted' = 332 (84.3%)
f(beta'x) at mean of independent vars = 0.497
Likelihood ratio test: Chi-square(17) = 216.729 [0.0000]

*** indicates that coefficients are significant at 1 percent level
** indicates that coefficients are significant at 5 percent level
* indicates that coefficients are significant at 10% level

Results indicate that Age is a significant factor in deciding consumer preferences for Arabian Cuisine. When compared with consumers in the age group of less than 20 years, the coefficients of Age2, Age3, Age4 and Age5 are negative and except Age2; all other Age coefficients are statistically significant at less than 5 percent level. Therefore the results show that Age is negatively and significantly related with the preference for Arabian cuisine. A consumer in the age group of 20 – 29 seems to prefer the Arabian cuisine and as the age increases the preference for Arabian Cuisine decreases. Consumers in the age group of greater than 50 years do not seem to prefer the Arabian food. It can be interpreted that young consumers especially in the age group of 20 -29 have developed a taste for Arabian cuisine but elderly consumers (age more than 50 years) prefer the local and/or regional cuisines. Gender coefficient is negative and not statistically significant indicating that Gender does not have any influence on preference for Arabian cuisine. The negative sign of the coefficient indicates that when compared to males, female consumers are less likely to choose Arabian cuisine. MS (Marital status) is positive and statistically significant indicating that when compared to consumers who are married; consumers who are single are more likely to consume Arabian cuisine. The results indicate that students are more likely to consume Arabian cuisine when compared to consumers who are into business. The other occupation coefficients are negative and statistically significant indicating consumers who are either salaried or Government employees do not seem to prefer Arabian cuisine when compared with businessmen. As the income of the consumers' increases, the preference for Arabian food decreases, this is evident from the negative and

statistically significant coefficients. The consumers belonging to the monthly income group of less than 10,000 are more likely to consume Arabian cuisine and as the income increases the preference for Arabian cuisine decreases indicating that high income consumers are less likely to prefer Arabian cuisine. When compared to Post Graduates, the Undergraduates and Graduates are more likely to consume Arabian cuisine. Religion of the consumers plays an important role as the coefficient R2, R3 and R4 are negative and statistically significant indicating that when compared to Muslim consumers (the reference group), consumers belonging to other religions are less inclined towards Arabian cuisine. When compared to non-vegetarians, vegetarians are less likely to choose Arabian cuisine.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Age, Income, Marital status, occupation, education and religion are the important determinants of the consumer choice for Arabian food. Most of the consumers in age group of 20-29 years prefer Arabian food and as the age increases the preference for Arabian food decreases especially in the case of consumers in the age group of greater than 50 years. The owners of the businesses located in the vicinity of Arabian food joints are a loyal clientele. The Arabian cuisine is a hit among undergraduate and graduate students indicating that the perfect location for an Arabian food outlet would be to near to educational institutions. The preference for Arabian cuisine does not seem to be gender-dependent. The consumers with monthly income less than 10,000 prefer Arabian food indicating it is economically priced and therefore more appealing to price sensitive consumers. Most of the places which serve Arabian food are not full fledged restaurants in terms of space and availability of variety, which explains why more single consumers frequent the Arabian food joints rather than married consumers with their family. Religion has a significant influence on choice of Arabian cuisine as Muslim consumers show a greater liking Arabian food. The results indicate that there are many untapped market segments which the Arabian food restaurants should target with better marketing strategies to create awareness highlighting the benefits of Arabian food, for example, Mandi which is perceived as less oily and greasy when compared to the traditional choice of Biryani. The Arabian food restaurants should focus on attracting target segments such consumers' belonging to age groups 40 – 50 years, consumers belonging to religions other than Islam, private salaried employees and Government employees. They can also target the vegetarian consumers segment with Arabian desserts. The Arabian food outlets can attract higher income groups by opening up in premium locations and by ensuring quality assurance. As a final point, the youngsters of city of Hyderabad have added Arabian cuisine to their long list of preferred global cuisines and with appropriate marketing strategies the other market segments can also tapped.

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