

**STRATEGIES AND PERCEPTIONS ABOUT COMBO MEALS OFFERED BY FAST  
FOOD RESTAURANTS IN CHANDIGARH**

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**ABSTRACT**

Combo meals in the modern era of food business have become an important tool to increase the sales. Many fast food companies of Chandigarh have succeeded by pairing the products at affordable price with other hot selling products. The modern fast food chains and restaurants are trendsetters that have introduced value-based combos with offering choices to the costumers. This has been possible with the study and research of market trends, changing socio economic conditions of citizens and changing taste buds among youth. This study identifies and compares the various adopted strategies of restaurants and fast food companies in Chandigarh to sell their combo meals. The combo meals of five restaurants and fast food chains from Chandigarh region shall be analyzed through interview method conducted with Patrons of these restaurant and fast food chains. The perceptions of customers about those combo meals shall also be studied to identify the gaps and recommendations shall be made to bridge those gaps.

**KEY WORDS:** Combo Meals, Fast food, Restaurants, Strategy

**INTRODUCTION**

Chandigarh “the city beautiful” has always been attracted to the people from neighboring states like Punjab, Haryana, Himanchal Pradesh, J&K, Bihar, Uttrakhand, Jharkhand etc. The reason for this fascination is that since its inception, Chandigarh has been projected as a growing city

where industrial and services sector has been offering its residents variety of jobs ranging from menial to professional profile. This has created several layers in socio economic conditions of the people residing in this UT. However, the fact that Chandigarh is a Union Territory has meant that almost all the government offices in Punjab and Haryana had their Head offices/ regional offices situated here. Thus, a large section of the population of this city is that of salaried class, which can be equated with middle class, upper middle and lower middle class of society. The calm and serene settings of this city ensured that almost everyone, be it a high level bureaucrat from south or a labor class person from east, who came to Chandigarh, made it their home forever. A small section of people living here are businessmen also, again ranging from big industrialists to small retailers, traders etc. Generally speaking, it can be said that a large segment of society living here comprises of people with lower spending capacity and only a small percentage of residents lead an extravagant life. More or so, as the city boasts of some of the best educational institutions in the country, a large number of students live here. But again their spending power remains meager.

Due to a good scope of large varieties of jobs ranging from menial to professional profile and In order to cater to the various sections of the society as explained above, the restaurant industry in the city has been growing at a phenomenal rate in the past few decades. From the time when just a few renowned restaurants like Tehal singh, Deluxe dhaba etc. existed in the city in 80's , a lot of new restaurant formats, from new theme restaurants to the fast food multi national chains like McD , KFC, Barbeque nation etc. have opened shops in the city.

Whatever the name or size of the eatery, everyone had to keep in mind the low spending power of the clientele while fixing prices on the menu. Consequently, bundling up of the meals came up as a smart tool to sell the dishes available to the penny scrimped population of the city by the restaurant and fast food operators. Combo meals in today's world have become requisite for business improvement and is considered as an easy tool for promotion of sales in many business ventures such as:

- Educational Cafeterias
- Quick Service Restaurants
- Business canteens
- Fine Dining Restaurants

- Multi Cuisine Dine ins (Indian, Chinese, Italian etc.)
- Other Dine in Operations such as Drive Through, take away etc.

Previous researches had shown that restaurant food is generally unhealthy, but a customer can recognize bundling meal options, along with nutritional information for each dish highlighted in the Menu

The researchers analyzed 5 restaurants with 20 customers each to know the choice pattern of combo meal on the basis of location, age as well as the dishes or items bundled together.

My research finding states that people like to buy combo meals in Chandigarh's Restaurants and fast food joints even if there is no discounts are offered to them which means that collaborated consumption business model for these joints are highly profitable. Moreover low selling dishes are sold as an complementary goods setting new trends among the youth by pairing them with main dish eg:pairing burger with coke, tomato sauce or potato masala Kathie kebab with mint chutney and onion fried rings served with a a refreshing drink of 150 ml.

“Based on my research it appears that to sustain in food business in Chandigarh combo meal is a mandatory process as it is served in subsidized rate, can make sales increased by 60% to 70% and befitted within the pocket of everyone in the city keeping in view the socio economic life of the citizens”.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Keeping in view the target market of the city: low wagers, student community and govt. official, who usually sojourn the various restaurants and fast food outlets ,the modern strategies observed by these joints makes the eatery experience more memorable among the costumers. It is evident from previous study that majority of the food lover prefers visit stand alone Quick Service Outlets with their friends in a groups and when accompanied by family they prefer restaurants in mall or multiplex. But still the pattern of ordering food is similar to that in fast food joints.

Consumer behavior is quite conservative for example while choosing meals, cost is considered to be the primary factor along with factors such as brand name or Environment.

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Another study done by Nikhil M, Mallika Bhalla and S. Kaplash in this contexts reveals that Chandigarh has been known for a city of food explorer which prompt the entrepreneur to invest heavily in food industry and thus it witness new blocks in restaurant and fast food industry every now and then. There is a huge challenge and risk for the new entrant to sustain their market value and prove their existence every now and then. The survival mantra is to come up with new concept in different element of food business and food selling technique is one of them.

Their study says that 60% of new restaurants succeeds out of which 40% make them as a brand down the line and 40% new restaurants struggles to put their mark on the target costumers and eventually shuts down due to heavy economical loss.

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The theme and concept is much needed to be reflected in the food joint menu and moreover the food menu innovation and pricing innovation is very important to be in business. As trends changed and the industry evolved in Chandigarh and its surroundings, Clubbing of dishes was aftermaths of evolution and innovation in the menu.

Moreover, menu changes leads to variety in Menu, and according to observations presented by BernStien et al. (in the year 2008), consumer's value varieties in their menu choices.

Combo meal is a much appreciated choice among the food lovers. After analyzing the recent trends in consumer preferences over food, Di Pietro et al. (2004) conclude that food items that are healthy and nutritious are becoming the latest trends in restaurant menus even in quick service domain. In consideration to the growing trend towards health food choices, menu engineering and planning has becomes more complex due to the involvement of tasks such are exploring , selection and innovation of the health menu options. Here in bundling up of the meal can be a good option in which time to time consultation from nutritionist may be seeked to provide healthy diet to the costumers.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The Study was conducted among the combo meals offered by five restaurants and fast food chains from Chandigarh region. The same was analyzed through interview with 100 customers who ordered from the restaurant (20 customers from each restaurant). The study focused on

- The customer awareness on Combo Offers
- The Choice of Customers to Combo over than A 'La carte Orders
- The combo preference of customers?
- How people felt combo offer is economical?

## **METHODOLOGY**

Combo Offers or generally called as 'Bundling Strategy', the practice of including two or more together to attract customer has always been one of the finest strategies in many industries. Combo offers are not just confined to Food and Beverage Industry, it has been always a customer attractive strategy in Banks, Telecommunication, Music Industry, Entertainment Industry, and many more.

This study was conducted in the venue of the 5 restaurants interviewing 20 customers from each restaurant to understand the combo offers and how customers' choses the combo offers from variety of choices. It was also noticed that the demographic especially age difference impacted the choice different combos offered. The study was conducted along 17 weeks from May 2019 to August 2019. A Cross-sectional Descriptive study was conducted to analyze the impact of combo offers among customers in the selected outlets. The study population was selected on a random sampling method as following

<b>Number of Outlets</b>	<b>No: of persons Interviewed in each outlet</b>	<b>Total number of people Interviewed</b>
<b>5</b>	20	100

Before starting the interviews with the customers 18 food and beverage outlets were chosen for observational visits, the 5 outlets were chosen out of that on the basis of footfall in the outlet and consent from the authorities to conduct the study after explaining the intention of the study. Before finalizing the final interview question, a pilot run of the questionnaire were conducted

among 45 students in Chandigarh Group of colleges' student Canteen. After the administration of pilot testing questions that were vague or unclear were rephrased and questions that did not contribute to the research were removed. The questions in the questionnaire were evaluated using Likert Scale Rating of 4 points

- Strongly Agree = 1
- Agree = 2
- Don't know = 3
- Strongly Disagree = 4

For statistical Analysis of the Data that was collected during the interview sessions, the SPSS for windows was used. In the study, with recommendations from the food and beverage outlet owners and managers we have kept their name confidential. The following demographic of customers were found in each restaurant

**Table -1**

Age Group	Outlet A	Outlet B	Outlet C	Outlet D	Outlet E
16- 20	1	0	14	0	2
21-26	3	6	5	0	12
27-45	14	10	1	4	5
45+	2	4	0	16	1
Total	20	20	20	20	20

The location of the outlets very well impacted the demographic of the customers in each outlets, Outlet A was located near a park in Chandigarh which had a high traffic of family customers, Outlet B was located in one a famous Mall which showed almost equal distribution of customers from the age group of 21 to 45+, Outlet C the location was near a famous college in Chandigarh region hence the student community belonging to age group of 16-20 was maximum. Outlet D was located near Art Museum Chandigarh Sector 10, Outlet E was located near a famous IT company in Chandigarh. The above table shows the location of each outlet had a huge impact on the demographic of each restaurant.

The study showed that the choice of each customer entirely depended on the location and the age group of customers, the study when conducted on the choice of Combos with options as given below

- Dish + Soft Drinks – one main dish such as Berger or Sandwich with a choice of Soft Drink
- Dish + Side Dish – one main dish as Berger or Sandwich with fries or chips
- Meal – Appetizer as soup or started with main dish sweet dish and soft drink
- Family Meal – 4 appetizers, 4 main dishes, 4 sweets and 1Lbeverage and two toys.

the nature of combos provided in the outlets are as mentioned, the interview of customers based on each outlets showed an interesting pattern of choice done by the customers solely based on the demographic of the customers in each restaurant in a general view the outlet which is near the college had more choice of dish and soft drink or dish and side dish as compared to the outlet near the arts museum.

**Table. 2**

Nature of Combo Meals	Outlet A		Outlet B		Outlet C		Outlet D		Outlet E	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Dish+ Soft drinks	3	15	1	5	12	60	0	0	5	25
Dish+Side Dish	4	20	1	5	7	35	1	5	12	60
Meals	7	35	7	35	0	0	5	25	2	10
Family Meals	6	30	11	55	1	5	14	70	1	5
Total	20	100	20	100	20	100	20	100	20	100

### **Outlet A**

Located near the park of Chandigarh, the customers had a diverse variety of choice so was the diversity of age of customers visiting it was noticed that majority of the customer chose Meal as an option of combo which was 35% (n=7), family meals was chosen by 30% (n=6) and dishes with side dishes such as fries of chips was taken by 20% (n=4) and dish with soft drinks was

opted by 15% (n=3), the observation made was that the demographic of this location as a mix of age groups.

### **Outlet B**

Located inside a Mall, the customers were mainly friends or family, demographic diversity was more focused in to young shoppers and family group. The majority of the customer, 55% (n=11) preference was family meal that consisted of 4 appetizers, 4 main dish, 4 side dish, 1L Beverage and 2 toys. 35%(n=7) preferred meals that consisted of appetizer, main dish, sweets and beverage, only 5% each (n=1) preferred either Dish and Soft drink or dish and side dish, The location being a prime shopping Mal seemed like a place for young shoppers and family shoppers who preferred to spend a meal time at the outlet.

### **Outlet C**

Located near a renowned college in Chandigarh the demography of the crown was in age group of 16-20 years, the study showed that 60%(n=12) of the customers preferred dish along with soft drink, 35% (n=7) preferred dish with side dish such as fries or chips, and no one preferred meals. However, we were surprised to know there was an option of family meal when inquired we knew that it was 4 friend who jointly ordered together so every body could have the food together.

### **Outlet D**

Located in the Chandigarh Sector 10, near to the famous Art Museum of Chandigarh, the local crowd of this area is basically and generally concentrated to scholars and adult people who are in the age gap of 27 to 45+. The study showed that 70% (n=14) have opted for Family meals comprising of four appetizers, four main dishes and four sweet dishes, 1L beverage and 2 toys, most customers visiting the outlet were family with children visiting the museum. 25% (n=5) opted for meals combo and 5% (n=1) opted for main dish along with side dish.

### **Outlet E**



Located in the most trending and fast-moving Chandigarh IT park, the outlet was primarily located near to two Major IT companies. The study revealed that most IT technicians 60% (n=12) preferred to order Main Dish with Side dish as compared to 25% (n=5) who ordered main dish with Soft drink reasons for this may be because most IT companies have beverage dispensing machines in their office for the convenient of the employees, 10% (n=2) ordered meals and only 5% (n=1) ordered family meals.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study showed that even though there are lot of bundling strategies that famous companies come up with for a attracting customers, the study revealed that not all bundling strategies work in every place. The trend of Combo differed from location to location and the type of target customers the outlet had. Demographic also played a very important role in the preference of combos chosen by customers. As anticipated the study also showed that the choice of the customers also depended on the sales person in the counter and the effective suggestive selling he/she used to sell to the customer.

The limitation of the study was, the choice of people's combo also depends on various meal periods, and an elaborate study on the same could be done on the various meals period such as breakfast, lunch or dinner. Combos are not only offered by outlets in the selected area, it is being there in most food outlet and the impact and perception of customer even change on geography as well as climatic conditions for example during a hot day people prefer to choose combo meals with beverages.

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