Impact Of COVID-19 On The Social Media Marketing Campaigns By Stand-Alone Fine-Dine Restaurants In Pune City.

Mr.Amit S. Khare

Research Scholar, Assistant Professor, Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Department of Hotel Management, Pune.

&

Mr. Vishal Alkonda

Assistant Professor,
Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Department of Hotel Management,
Pune.

Abstract

The social media is one of the new marketing tools for the hospitality industry of which stand-alone fine dine restaurants is a part. This tool has been explored in many other industries but for hospitality industry, this is relevantly underutilised tool of marketing. This tool has helped stand-alone restaurants with marketing efforts during the times of COVID pandemic. Marketing strategies when carried on social media are built around different aspects of the restaurants like menu, facilities, customer reviews, food bloggers/critic's reviews, offer, photos, etc. This paper tries to find out the impact of COVID-19 of these different aspects and it also will focus on any new components if any has been utilised by the restaurants in Pune city.

Most of the times during lock down period restaurants were merely operating only through food deliveries. No restaurants were allowed to serve customers as dine-in facilities were closed. Since unlock phase, restaurants were allowed to serve food within premise but with seating restrictions and new hygiene standards. The paper also tries to find out if these new normal conditions have affected different elements of social media marketing campaigns. The data will be collected through formal questionnaire and interviews. The study will help the restaurants to develop efficient campaigns on social media platforms.

Key Words: COVID-19, Social Media Marketing, Marketing campaign, Fine Dine restaurants, Stand Alone restaurants, Pune.

• Introduction

A fine-dine restaurant (FDR) can be simply explained as an establishment serving fine food at thoughtfully designed dining rooms in a formal way of serving by well-trained servers. The importance is given not only to food but also to the décor, style of service, attitude of staff and quality of both the food and service. It is also called as *White Tablecloth Restaurants* (Kanter, 2018). This might be the reason that these restaurants are on a little high priced that other restaurant types. It was observed that there is a steady growth of 19% in fine-dine sector across India. (Dabas&Lunawat, 2017)

With increasing popularity of social media, even restaurants have started using it as marketing tool more and more. The social media is one of the new marketing tools for the hospitality industry of which stand-alone fine-dine restaurants is a part. Social Media Marketing (SMM) as a marketing tool has been explored in many other industries but for hospitality industry, this is relevantly underutilised tool of marketing. It was seen that 75% of the restaurants frequently use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram to advertise their restaurants. Most of these campaigns are photocentric as it illustrates the product in a betterway. (Dunphy. 2013)

Most of these FDRs use social media as a marketing tool because –

- a. Wider reach compared to other marketing tools (traditional) social media has a wider reach. This reach is not restricted by any geographic boundaries as anyone can access the social media from anywhere provided the user has a interface and internet connectivity.
- b. Ease of use social media is one of the easiest tools to use. This media gives a chance for the campaign creator to create the campaign even with minimum technical knowledge. Anyone using a normal social media platform can create the marketing campaign and can make changes in the marketing effort at any given time without hassle. (Sajid, 2016)
- c. Low cost marketing tool –this is one of the most prominent reasons of social media getting it's fame as a social media marketing tool. Because of the technical advancements in gadgets and interfaces anyone can use social media to create the campaigns. This does not need any technical intermediaries to create or update campaigns. Most of the social media sites allow creating campaigns for no charge. Some campaigns on social media can be charged (very negligible cost) only if the user wants to go for the paid campaign where the reach and frequency is increased too.

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ISSN: 2233-7857 IJFGCN Copyright ©2020 SERSC d. No time constraint – as social media can be accessed from anywhere and by anyone, there is no time constraint for usage of it. So campaigns can be created, edited or even deleted at any point of time. (Singh, 2010)

Components of a Social Media Marketing Campaigns

There are different elements that go into creating a marketing campaigns on social media around which the campaign is created called as components of social media marketing campaigns. These are the main points usually displayed on the marketing effort on social media by restaurants. This study focuses on these components which include:

- 1. Reviews by customers positive reviews written by customers are often high-lighted and displayed on the social media page. These are usually unpaid reviews and not all reviews are used for marketing. This also helps as e-word of mouth and works as a referral for customers while making a buying decision.
- 2. Reviews by a food bloggers these usually are paid reviews where a restaurants pay to a food blogger with better follower numbers to visit the restaurant and write a review about it.
- 3. Photos Photos of food served, ambience are often displayed on social media pages. Dunphy (2013) finds out that the photos used for marketing efforts have a better impact on customers than any other components.
- 4. Offers a restaurant creates special offers to attract customers. Most of these offers are created at the time of special events of festive seasons when the competition is higher. Some offers are also created in low seasons to survive from missing out business in harder times. Usually discounts, packages are offered through social media.
- 5. Menu & Facilities Most of the restaurants do have their food and beverage menu on social media page. Some of these restaurants also mention the facilities provided at the restaurant as well. But these are not a popular components of the marketing campaigns.
- 6. Table bookings and timings These are the components of the social media page which facilitate the customers to book table and informing the users of the opening and closing timings of the restaurant.

Following two are the new components which have been observed as new components that are coming in light in recent times –

- 7. Food Delivery Since the unlock phase 1 where restaurants were permitted to run business through home delivery of food, this component has emerge as an important part of the campaign. Since many of the restaurants started offering food deliveries newly after the new norms to tackle the virus, it has become important information to be shared with customers.
- 8. Hygiene & Sanitation Many restaurants has also been boosting as it becomes the proof of following the norms by government to make customers feel safe about the hygiene standards followed at the restaurants.

• Objectives

- 1. To find the components of social media marketing campaign by stand-alone fine dine restaurants.
- To find out the impact of COVID-19 on the social media marketing campaigns by stand-alone fine dine restaurants.
- 3. To study the change in the social media marketing components as an effect of COVID-19.

Hypothesis

- H_{1} $COV\overline{ID}$ -19 has an impact on social media marketing campaigns by stand-alone fine-dine restaurants.
- H_2 The components of social media marketing have changed as an effect of COVID-19.
- H_3- The frequency of the SMM campaigns has increased since unlock phase.

• <u>Literature Review</u>

The research paper by Vaisakh et al. (2020) titled "Tourism marketing through social media after COVID-19 in Kerala" finds out that social media has been used by tourism industry after unlock phase 1 as sectors in tourism industry started operating with few restrictions. Some of the tour companies also allowed few of their employees to work from social media platforms. This paper focuses on different approaches of the social media utilised by different tourism components in Kerala state. Social media was used by tourism organisations to share stories about travellers and travel. It was also used to spread the safety and hygiene at the tour agents and offices of the tourism offices. Some of the tourism companies also started virtual tours at different tourist sites to encourage tourist to see the destinations virtually. This study does not consider any other industry than tourism that too only in the state of Kerala.

In a paper titled "a study of impact of social media of consumer behaviour in restaurant industry of Jaipur city" by Goyal (2016) it states that majority of the restaurants utilise social media platform for marketing purposes due to its wider reach and ease to share the information about the company. Questionnaire was developed by

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researcher to collect the data. This research considered different variables like duration, motivation of use & effect of using the social media to find the impact. The researcher finds out that customers are influenced more from social media marketing campaigns compared to traditional media options. It also points out that customers mainly use social media to gather the information about the restaurant before making the buying decision in lesser time than making a decision by referring the traditional media. The study only focuses on the impact of the social media on decision making and no factor from business perspective has been considered to carry out this research.

In the thesis by Malbasa (2018), titled "social media &it's impact user's decision making to visit a fine dine restaurant", the researcher tries to find out different social media strategies for a successful campaign for fine dine restaurants. Both the qualitative and quantitative data has been collected through questionnaires. It was found out that photos, special offers, videos, positive word of mouth in form of reviews are the most effective components of the social media campaigns. This research was conducted in Zagreb before COVID-19 pandemic.

Song &Yoo (2016) in their research paper titled "the role of social media during the pre-purchasing stage" state the importance of social media in decision making process. The paper emphasises on the use of social media by consumers in pre-purchasing stage. At this stage social media is proving to be a better media than other traditional media. The paper finds out that developing a relation with customers becomes very easy when social media is used in the pre-purchase stage as the campaign or the offers reach to wider customer base than traditional media. At this stage most of the firms use a lot of photos, offers to create the campaign around. Offering discounts, special deals and packages are second most preferred components of the social media marketing strategy used to attract customers. This paper does not considerany specific industry.

According to Toanoglou et al. (2018), in the paper titled "Social media marketing in restaurant enterprises: a research on Michelin star restaurants", the process of reaching to the target audience has fastened up with the usage of social media marketing. It was seen that the restaurants use social media mainly for promotional and advertising activities. Every post or photo or other marketing activity on social media helps to create an identity for a restaurant which in turn helps to increase the brand awareness for the restaurant. The study has considered only the Michelin starred restaurants in Greece. The paper thus focuses on the activities by these restaurants on different social media platforms (mainly Instagram) related to the marketing of the restaurant. The sample for this study includes 21 Michelin starred restaurants. The main focus of the study is on the campaigns built around photos and illustrations as the study finds out that around 50% of restaurants' posts are of food photos either taken by themselves or by customers and it also finds out to be the most effective way of marketing over the social media platform. It also finds out that uploading photos are not enough, mentioning the necessary information about restaurant facilities helps in the success of a marketing campaign.

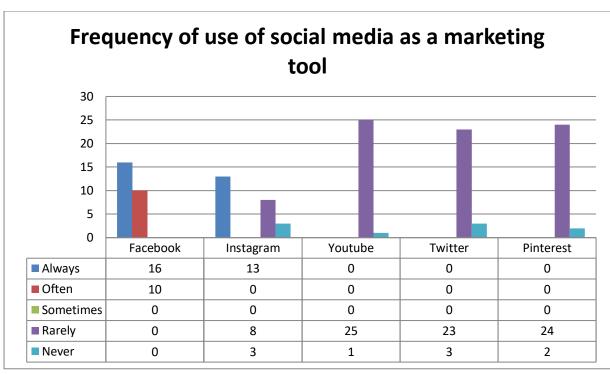
• Research Methodology

The primary data was collected though structured questionnaire developed by researchers. The questions were developed in two parts. First part focused on different components of social media marketing campaigns used before the pandemic and the later part considered same components but since the period the restaurants restarted functioning in unlock phase. The main aim of this questionnaire was to find out the impact of the COVID-19 on the components of social media marketing campaigns and to find if the campaigns have changed the dimensions as an impact on these factors. Data was collected from 26 stand-alonefine-dine restaurants in Pune City. Secondary data was collected through various research papers, magazines, reports, books and news articles.

• Data Interpretation and findings

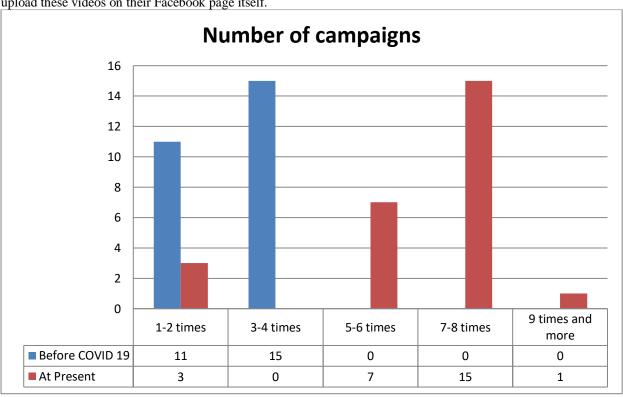
The data was gathered from 26 stand-alone fine dine restaurants in Pune city. Most of these restaurants have more than 65 pax capacity. It was seen from the data that most of these restaurants have their presence on Facebook (26), Instagram (18) and very few restaurants use YouTube (1), Twitter (3) and Pinterest (2) for social media marketing. Only 58% of these restaurants have their dedicated websites. 100% of these restaurants use Facebook as they have most of the number of followers on Facebook.

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(Chart 1: Frequency of use of social media as a marketing tool)

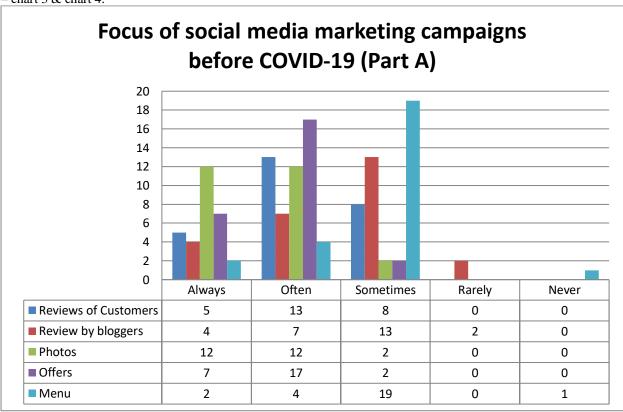
It can be seen from the above chart (Chart 1) most of the stand-alone fine dine restaurants use Facebook as social media marketing tool more than any other social media platforms. All the restaurants use Facebook as their preferred choice of SMM platform. Instagram is second preferred SMM platform for the restaurants. Facebook allows a user to not only post the photos but also to share other marketing material like write ups, reviews, etc. on the other hand Instagram is photo centric, which means all the marketing efforts have to be in photo form if Instagram is to be used. Hardly any restaurants in Pune use other platforms mention in the chart above. YouTube is mainly used only for videos so it becomes harder and costly for a restaurant to use it as a SMM platform. Even though a video blogger posts a review video on his/her YouTube channel, restaurants upload these videos on their Facebook page itself.



(Chart 2: Number of campaigns)

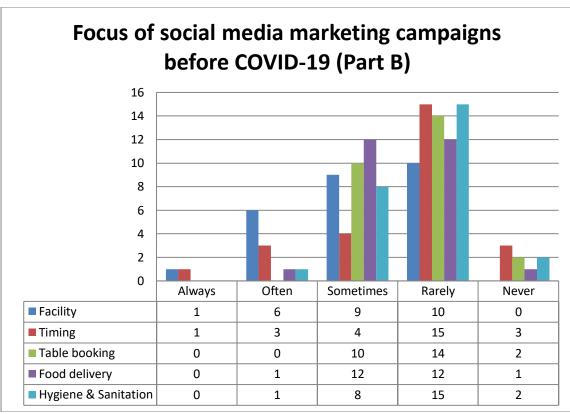
With the changing scenario with COVID-19 restriction efforts, the frequency of the SMM campaigns has changed as well. It was observed that most of the restaurants (57.69%) used to carry SMM campaigns for 3 to 4 times in a week of which most of the campaigns were photocentric. 42.30% of the restaurants used to use SMM at least 1 or 2 times a week. Restaurant have felt a need to market themselves more to reach to wider customer base and to create confidence in their target market to come and visit the place or at least to order food for home delivery from them. To tackle this problem of being forgotten by customers most of the restaurants have started running SMM campaigns almost daily. It was seen than there were 15 restaurants (57.69%) which run the marketing campaigns for everyday where there main focus of the campaign is shifted to high-lighting the deliveries, hygiene and sanitation followed at their outlets. Around 27% restaurants carry out SMM campaigns atleast 5 to 6 times in a week. There was one restaurant which carries out the SMM campaigns for more than 9 times in a week. And only 3 restaurants (12%) restaurant still carry out the SMM practices as before COVID-19 conditions. It is also analysed from the collected responses that most of these campaigns are around the hygiene and sanitation in pictured form. Some of the restaurants are even shooting and uploading the video of how are they taking care of the sanitation by following all the standards dictated by government.

For the ease of understanding the data interpretation the components of the SMM have been divided into 2 parts – chart 3 & chart 4.



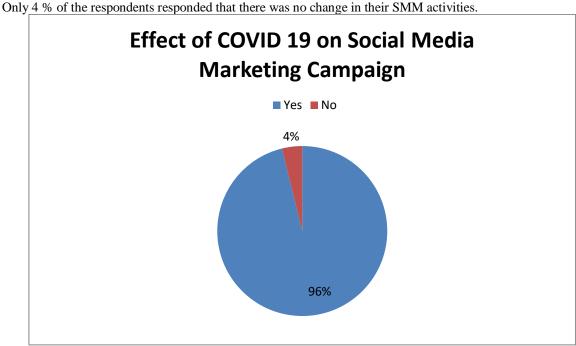
(Chart 3: Focus of SMM campaigns before COVID-19 - Part A)

It can be seen observed from both chart 3 & 4 that most of the restaurant build their SMM campaign around photos. The photos illustrate near to actual picture of an entity which helps as a better guiding source for customers. 24 restaurants out of 26 have used photos for the SMM campaigns. Using offers for creating a marketing campaign was the second most chosen component. All kind of discount offers, festive season offers are included in this. It was also seen that most of the restaurants responded positively while responding about offers and photos which means all of the restaurants have used these components some times since they have started using the SMM. Reviews of customers and bloggers were used by some restaurants as marketing material. Customer reviews work as e-word of mouth. It has been seen that the restaurants having more followers post these reviews often as it has been seen that referrals have better impact on attracting customers. Bloggers reviews are often paid reviews. The impact of these paid reviews depends on number of followers of that particular blogger. 73% of the restaurants responded that they have used menu for marketing on SMM sometimes but not as frequently as photos, offers and reviews. The restaurants have found to be using menu for advertising only at the time of new menu introduction or some special menus to be offered. Facilities, timing of the restaurants and table booking were hardly used by restaurants in Pune city to build their SMM campaigns. While many restaurant did not use hygiene practices as their focus for SMM effort before the pandemic hit.



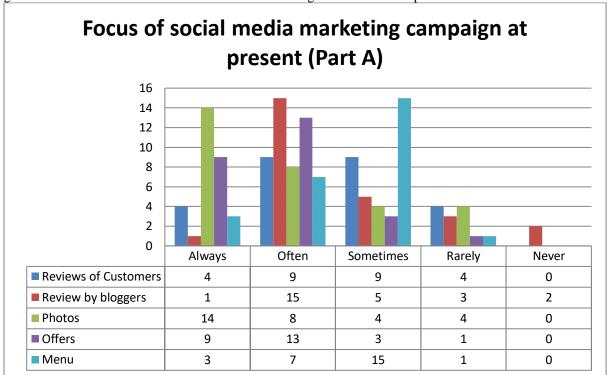
(Chart 4: Focus of SMM campaigns before COVID-19 - Part B)

Some of the stand-alone fine dine restaurant did not offer any food delivery before pandemic and hence did not pay attention to the deliveries as the component of the SMM campaign. Hygiene, table bookings and food deliveries were rarest of the components used by restaurants in Pune city to create a social media campaign. Chart 5 shows the perception of the restaurant representatives about the impact of COVID-19 on the SMM efforts. 96% of the respondents responded that the SMM campaigns run by their restaurants have changed as an effect of COVID-19 pandemic. As the new rules and regulations were set by government, all the restaurants wanted to create the awareness in the minds of their customers that they are following all the standards prescribed and using all the necessary hygiene and sanitary practices to stay away from spreading the virus.



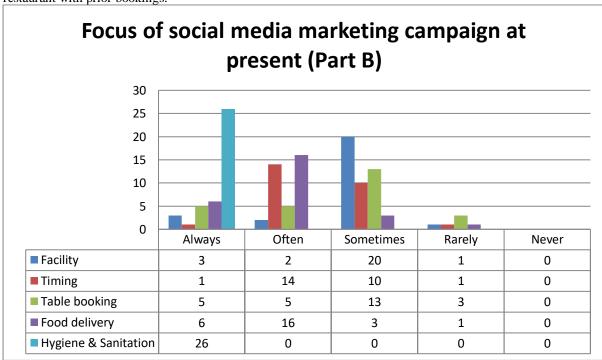
(Chart 5: Effect of COVID-19 on SMM campaigns)

While collecting the responses about the change in the components the change can be seen in the responses gathered itself. For the convenience this chart had been again divided in two parts.



(Chart 6: Focus of SMM campaigns at present – Part A)

It can be seen from the chart that Photos are still the most used component of SMM effort by the restaurants. But the focus of the photos has now been moved from food photos to photos high-lighting the hygiene and sanitation efforts taken. Some restaurants have also created videos showing the hygiene and sanitary procedures. All the restaurants using SMM (100%) have shifted the focus of their campaigns on Hygiene and Sanitary practices. The use of this component in the SMM is not only spreading the awareness about the practices by the restaurants but also creating the confidence in the minds of customers to visit the restaurants or at least order from the restaurants following the hygiene practices. It was also seen that customers prefer to visit such a restaurant with prior bookings.

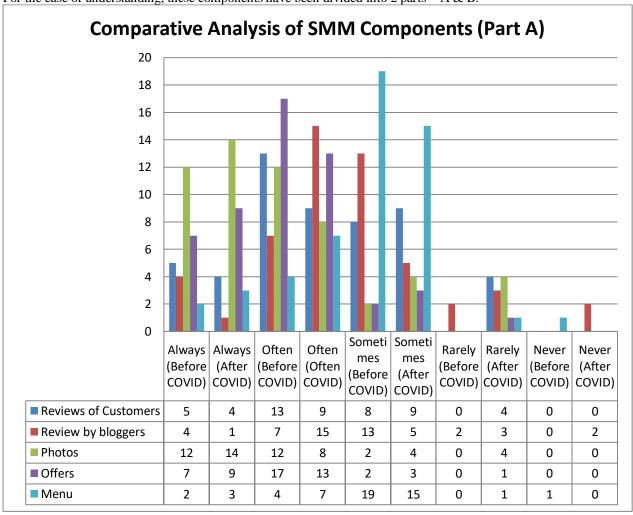


(Chart 7: Focus of SMM campaigns at present – Part B)

Food deliveries are also getting the lime light in SMM campaigns. Most of the restaurants which only survived on dinning in before the pandemic have now started delivering the food to the doorstep of their customers to stay in the competition and survive through the pandemic. Another component which has been used mostly after unlock phase is offers to attract customers. Around 85% of the restaurants have created different offers to attract the customers and are using the same offers to create the marketing campaign around it. These offers do not only include the discounts but also offers for festive season, loyalty rewards, etc. Reviews are still used by restaurants to create SMM campaigns but the restaurants are now using the reviews of bloggers more frequently than reviews by customers. Restaurants have also started stressing on prior table bookings. As government allowed the restaurants to operative with only 50% of capacity it has become crucial for restaurants to encourage the customers to book a table so they won't have to wait or refrain from denying the entry. Table booking was available previously as well but it was a part of the social media page profile only. A lot of restaurants have also started including the operating timings in campaigns as the operational timings of the restaurants have been reduced considerably. With the stand still of the transportation for few months, procuring the products have been a little difficult. To tackle this many restaurants have down sized the menus which are now flashed frequently on social media platforms by many restaurants.

Comparative Analysis of SMM Components

For the ease of understanding, these components have been divided into 2 parts – A & B.



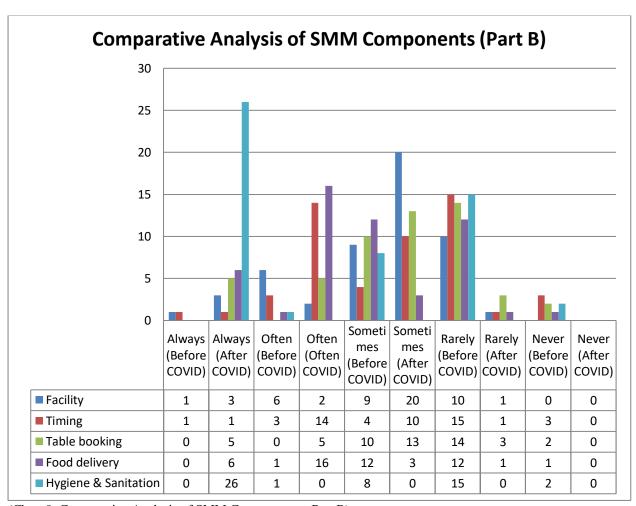
(Charts 8: Comparative Analysis of SMM Components – Part A)

While studying the effect of COVID 19 on SMM campaigns, above mentioned components were studied for their before and after the pandemic.

It can be seen that some of the components have been utilised to create SMM campaigns around more after unlock phase than before COVID-19 started. It can be seen that the use of bloggers' reviews has gone up by 114% after restaurants reopened. Most of the customers consider reviews by bloggers as more trustworthy as any other customers. The reviews by general customers can be biased and hence the trustworthiness of those reviews could be doubtful. But when a blogger writes about a restaurant, customers consider that more organic in nature. It can also be seen in Part A that the usage of 'menu' as a SMM component has increased considerably. A lot of restaurants have reduced the menu immediately after unlocking the restaurant as the

supply chain for many of the products which are not local has been affected. So reducing the menu tackles this challenge. To inform the customers about the reduced menu many restaurants have created their SMM campaigns highlighting the menu they are currently offering at the restaurants. This has also helped customers in making buying decision even before visiting the restaurant.

It can be seen in Part B in the chart that 'Hygiene and Sanitation' is the component which has affected the most. Hardly any restaurants considered this factor as the focal point of their SMM campaigns before COVID-19. But it can be seen that all the restaurants are now using this factor more frequently than any other factor in the list to build their marketing campaigns on social media platforms. Showing videos about the precautions taken, uploading photos about the sanitary and cleaning procedures at the restaurants are some of the ways by which this component has been used. It was seen that it creates a trust in customers to visit the restaurants following the hygiene standards as per the guidelines. Many of the restaurants have also started home delivery services or at least have tied with third parties to deliver the food to their customers. The surge can be seen in the usage of food delivery component in current scenario. With the new guidelines, the restaurant service timings have been changed as well. Many of the restaurants have started displaying the service timings more dominantly and most of the restaurants have clubbed it with Table bookings.



(Chart 9: Comparative Analysis of SMM Components – Part B)

• Hypothesis Testing

 \bullet $\,$ $H_0-COVID\text{-}19$ has no impact on social media marketing campaigns by stand-alone fine-dine restaurants.

 H_1 -COVID-19 has an impact on social media marketing campaigns by stand-alone fine-dine restaurants.

Two tail T test was conducted to test this hypothesis. It tries to find out the change from the impact of COVID-19 on the social media marketing campaigns by stand-alone fine dine restaurants in Pune city.

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The result is as follow:
Difference Scores Calculations
Treatment 1 (Before COVID-19)
N1: 26
df1 = N - 1 = 26 - 1 = 25
M1: 1.58
SS1: 6.35
s21 = SS1/(N - 1) = 6.35/(26-1) = 0.25
Treatment 2 (At Present)
N2: 26
df2 = N - 1 = 26 - 1 = 25
M2: 3.42
SS2: 26.35
s22 = SS2/(N-1) = 26.35/(26-1) = 1.05
T-value Calculation
s2p = ((df1/(df1 + df2)) * s21) + ((df2/(df2 + df2)) * s22) = ((25/50) * 0.25) + ((25/50) * 1.05) = 0.65
s2M1 = s2p/N1 = 0.65/26 = 0.03
s2M2 = s2p/N2 = 0.65/26 = 0.03
t = (M1 - M2)/\sqrt{(s2M1 + s2M2)} = -1.85/\sqrt{0.05} = -8.23
T-value Calculation
t = (M - \mu)/SM = (1.85 - 0)/0.21 = 8.99
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The t-value is -8.23193. The p-value is < .00001. The result is significant at p < .05. Hence, null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and alternate hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. Hence it is further concluded that **COVID-19** has an impact on social media marketing campaigns by stand-alone fine-dine restaurants.

 \bullet H₀ – The focus of the components of social media marketing have not changed as an effect of COVID-19.

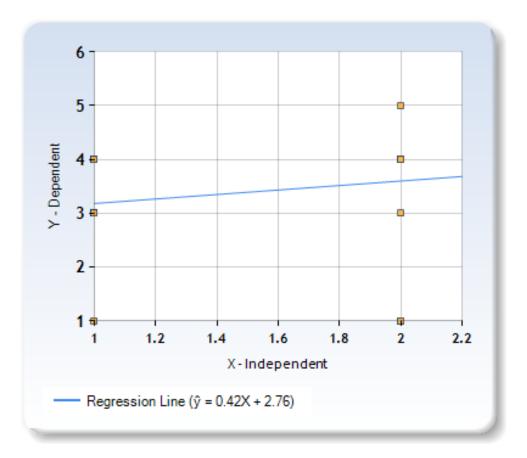
 H_2 – The focus of the components of social media marketing have changed as an effect of COVID-19.

This hypothesis was tested through two tailed t-test to check if the focus of the components in SMM has changed or not. The result is as follow:

```
Treatment 1 (Before COVID-19)
N1: 26
df1 = N - 1 = 26 - 1 = 25
M1: 2.31
SS1: 11.54
s21 = SS1/(N-1) = 11.54/(26-1) = 0.46
Treatment 2 (At Present)
N2: 26
df2 = N - 1 = 26 - 1 = 25
M2: 5
SS2: 0
s22 = SS2/(N - 1) = 0/(26-1) = 0
T-value Calculation
s2p = ((df1/(df1 + df2)) * s21) + ((df2/(df2 + df2)) * s22) = ((25/50) * 0.46) + ((25/50) * 0) = 0.23
s2M1 = s2p/N1 = 0.23/26 = 0.01
s2M2 = s2p/N2 = 0.23/26 = 0.01
t = (M1 - M2)/\sqrt{(s2M1 + s2M2)} = -2.69/\sqrt{0.02} = -20.21
The t-value is -20.20726. The p-value is < .00001. The result is significant at p < .05. Hence, null hypothesis
(H_0) is rejected and alternate hypothesis (H_2) is accepted. It is further concluded that the focus of the
components of social media marketing have changed as an effect of COVID-19.
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• **H**₀ - The frequency of the SMM campaigns has not increased since unlock phase. **H**₃ - The frequency of the SMM campaigns has increased since unlock phase.

Regression Analysis has been used to test this hypothesis. This test shows whether there has been change in the frequency of usage of SMM campaigns by stand-alone fine dine restaurants in Pune city.



Sum of X = 41

Sum of Y = 89

Mean X = 1.5769

Mean Y = 3.4231

Sum of squares $(SS_X) = 6.3462$

Sum of products (SP) = 2.6538

Regression Equation = $\hat{y} = bX + a$

$$b = SP/SS_X = 2.65/6.35 = 0.41818$$

$$a = M_Y - bM_X = 3.42 - (0.42*1.58) = 2.76364$$

$$\hat{y} = 0.41818X + 2.76364$$

A simple regression was calculated to check the change in the frequency of usage of SMM campaigns. Preliminary analysis was performed to make sure that there is no violation of assumption of normality and linearity. A significant linear equation was found through this test. Hence it is concluded that null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected and alternate hypothesis (H₃) has been accepted. It can be further concluded that **the frequency of the SMM campaigns has increased since unlock phase.**

Suggestions

The research shows that the frequency of the SMM has increased a since the pandemic broke out. Social media was readily available for log time which was not explored by these stand-alone fine-dine restaurants much. Because of ease of use and cost efficiency more and more restaurants started using SMM more often than before. This can be easily seen from the increased use of SMM campaigns as a marketing effort. To reach to

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wider market at the current times, a restaurant can use the photos of hygiene and sanitation practices or make videos of it and post it on their social media pages. This will not only spread the awareness but also will build the confidence in customers to visit the restaurant without stress. These photos then can be clubbed with the video reviews of the customers who have visited the restaurant after the unlock phase 3. The restaurants can also try to connect with customers by asking customers to share the photos of them at the restaurant on restaurants' social media page which will act as e-WOM. Menus can be prominently posted on social media pages which will help customers in placing orders even without handing over the printed menus which will reduce the physical contact.

Limitations

This paper has following limitations:

- 1. The study was conducted in Pune City, India.
- 2. Only stand-alone fine dine restaurants were part of this study.
- 3. No traditional marketing methods were studied in this paper.
- 4. The paper focuses only on the change in SMM as an impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

• Future Scope

As this study considers only stand-alone fine dine restaurants, other sectors of the hospitality and restaurants can be studied on similar lines in future. It also gives an opportunity for researchers to compare SMM campaigns with traditional methods of marketing like print media, broadcast media, etc.

Conclusion

With the increase used of social media platform it has become easier for the restaurants to reach to wider markets on a single click. The restaurants having their social media pages on these platforms have started using it to promote their businesses and market the restaurants. These campaigns before COVID-19 pandemic were not as aggressive as in current conditions. Reviews, photos, facilities, menus were mostly used to create the campaigns before February 2020. The study This study shows the new ranking of these components used by stand-alone fine dine restaurants in Pune city –

- 1. Hygiene & Sanitation
- 2. Photos
- 3. Food Delivery
- 4. Offers
- 5. Reviews(Customers & Bloggers)
- 6. Table bookings
- 7. Menus
- 8. Facilities
- 9. Timings

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