BRAND RESONANCE: A CASE OF BROWN SUGAR- BAKERS, CAFÉ AND LOUNGE, JAIPUR, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Brown Sugar a seven year old initiative launched the concept of designer cakes, unconventional bakery items like live ice-creams, frozen desserts, international flavours of bread and bakery items in Jaipur. The chain with an annual turnover of six crores was expanding into catering and had on cards, outlet formats, that redefined ease and swift of street munching and exclusivity of fine dining. Vishal hailed from a business family with a history of four generations in film distribution and a royal lineage of sweetmakers (Raj Halwai) for the kings of Jodhpur. In sync with ‘Make in India and Make for India’ vision Brown Sugar focused on customer centric strategies to address its strategic growth needs in an intensely competitive marketplace.

INTRODUCTION (INDIAN BAKERY CAFES: AN EMERGING CONCEPT)

The Indian market has seen a steady growth of coffee outlets and tea bars, both in the mass and class segment. Bakery cafes are yet another promising concept as consumers seek different places to hang out.

With an increasing affinity for informal socializing, Indian consumers are pushing demand for more ‘hang-out’ options where they can ‘relax and chill out’. Conventionally designed for a smaller footprint within a moderately lower catchment area, the cafe segment has been experimenting with innovative concepts in terms of format, size, menu offering, and location. Cafes are mainly food service formats, with beverages such as coffee, tea, juice, etc, with accompaniments. Based on the location, brand, and value proposition of the café the average cost per person ranges between Rs 60 to Rs 250.

With a large number of consumers scaling up the value chain, new segments with newer product offerings are emerging. The segment’s innovation has given rise to newer cafe formats like Bakery Cafes, which turnaround the concept of cafés by offering bakeries/chocolate along with complementary beverage items. Factors like value for money, hygienic preparations, quality service and experimentation in cuisines have become the core competence for such cafes.

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Thus, a Bakery Cafe, unlike a regular cafe, is a provider of baked food, with the accompanying beverages only a complement to the menu. A typical Bakery Cafe menu includes a wide selection of breads, as well as baked goods like scones, croissants, cookies, muffins, cakes, brownies, pies and puffs. The menu may also include soups, salads, and other dishes. In context of beverages, the menu offers a range of freshly brewed coffees, fine teas, iced teas, smoothies and shakes.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The rationale for the study involves analyzing challenges and opportunities in entrepreneurship, studying the feasibility of a business idea, assessing customer needs and determining brand resonance. The organization considered is Brown Sugar, one-of-its kind fully air conditioned and well furnished cafe, which offers beverages, shakes and light meals to its guests in an inviting atmosphere.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the present paper are as follows:

- To study the opportunities and challenges in entrepreneurship in context of food outlets.
- To evaluate the perception of respondents towards brand judgments, feelings, performance, imagery and resonance based on Keller’s framework of Brand Equity Model for Brown Sugar.
- To identify the awareness, usage occasions and patronizing behavior for the segment under study viz Bakers, cafe and lounges.
- To gain insight into word association for Brand “Brown Sugar”.

**BROWN SUGAR - AN OVERVIEW**

Targetted initially at high end millennial generation of globally mobile youth, the brand became a household name with family patronage matching hang-out friendship groups. Vishal Jalani, the heart, mind and soul behind the brand initiated the concept of bakery and café to actualize his childhood food cravings and he attached three other like-minded entrepreneurs namely Indu Jain, Sameer Goyal and Sunita Gupta to give shape to his idea.

The four entrepreneurs with diverse experience jointly set the following objectives for their new venture:

- To offer quality food to the public.
- To supplement the gap of existing bakery market which was highly unorganized and to offer value for money for high end products.
- To infuse international palate in the local market.

They were guided by the following vision, mission, quality and wow statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Vision</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>“To offer new genera food infused with local palate based on innovative practices through in-house R&amp;D and adhere to best CSR practices for satisfaction and retention of employees, clients and vendors.”</td>
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Mission
“Our aim is to offer quality food with innovative practices yet based on value for money approach with clear focus on customer retention, creation of new demands with working on best corporate and social benchmark practices of employee and customer satisfaction, offer hygienic and nutritional food.”

Quality statement
Understand new trends, conduct R&D, Innovate, benchmark best practices and exceed customer expectation.

Wow statement
“Change is for Good”

Source: Brown Sugar

The entrepreneurs decided in favour of Brown Sugar brand name as the name had connotation bordering at prohibition thus appealing to the raw basic instincts of the millennial generation.

The company was incorporated in the month of October 2010 and the first outlet was opened at Axis mall C- scheme, located in the heart of the city and at a walking distance from the famous Rajmandir Cinema. The launch was driven by the vision of offering a great bakery experience along with fresh, delicious café food and beverages at reasonable price. Brown Sugar focused on recipes and ingredients to ensure superior quality cakes, breads and pastries. Within 2-3 months of operations, it received encouraging response on account of its innovative menu and customized designer cakes.

In May 2012, the company strategically opened its second outlet at a location which had high potential but no food joint in environs namely at Malviya Nagar on the Calgary road. Success was witnessed in this outlet also. They continued innovating and customising products keeping the customer preferences in mind. Vishal said “We have maintained our standard of quality and service and have been introducing new items regularly to cater to the ever changing tastes of its customers.” As of March 2017 the company was operating five outlets in different high-traffic zones of the city.

In October 2014, the entrepreneurs further forayed into a newer format of Brown Sugar – the café and lounge with exclusive and bigger sitting space, focused majorly on food and beverage. The outlet caught up very fast and had been doing exceptionally well. At this moment the company decided to do backward integration of consolidating its production base and research and development team. They sought services of various consultants to provide them with guidance on menu re-engineering, production planning and implementation, training and standard operating procedures implementation.

Based on consultant recommendations, the company decided to make a base kitchen to cater to mass distribution and make quality benchmarks so that they can pave way for the organic growth of Brown Sugar and also for expansion of Chai manzil (specially focused on tea concept), Indian curry- (Indian food on take away model) and finally for catering services by their sister concern- The food excellence. With 780 sq. ft. of retail and 1000 sq. ft. of base kitchen in 2011-12 the company had grown in 2014-15 to 4300 sq. ft. of retail, 2000 sq. ft. of unit kitchen and 12000 sq. ft. of mother kitchen.
The journey of Brown Sugar with a vision of “offering a good bakery experience along with the café food and a good option of beverages at a reasonable price” in words of Vishal had been punctuated with crests and trough. Committed to taste, happiness and wellness of its customers Brown Sugar was considered amongst most popular bakery in the city by its target group.

Brown Sugar Product portfolio

It was an outlet opened specially for customized designer cakes of all shapes, types and flavors ranging from castle shaped pineapple cake to cartoon characters chocolate cake. Besides varied cakes it offered the following:

**Italian:** Included varieties of pizzas like Farm Fresh Pizza, Margarita Pizza, COC Pizza, Cheese Overload Pizza, Peppy Paneer Pizza with prices ranging from Rs. 169 to Rs. 202. Offerings also included pastas like Punjabi Pasta, Smoking Pasta, Pink Pasta, Pasta Al Fredo, Baked Lasagna and Pasta Alla Napoli ranging from Rs. 301 to Rs. 248 respectively.

**Around the Town:** It had Cheese steak sizzler and China Town sizzler priced at Rs. 322 and Rs. 301 respectively.

**Guilty Pleasures:** It consisted of Hot chocolate brownie, Hot sizzling brownie, Chocolate Fantasy, Chocolate Waffles, pancakes priced from around Rs. 85 to Rs. 185 respectively.

**Refreshing tea and chocolate shakes** from around Rs. 40 to Rs. 150.

**Aromatic coffee and cold coffee** with attractive offerings like God-Father expresso, Caramel Praline latte, Black Misto, Hammered choco frappe priced from Rs.60 to 150.

They also offered various shakes and coolers, salads, soups, wraps and Chinese dishes. Customer reviews on social networking sites indicated that out of their offered products majority of the customers had liked Manchurian, Brownie, Spinach Corn Sandwich, Red Velvet Cake, Coffee Tiramisu, Chana Bun, Cheesecake.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To substantiate the entrepreneurial journey of Brown sugar from the consumers lens a primary research was undertaken to explore knowledge, awareness and user behaviour for the cafe. It was also aimed at gaining an insight into the brand “Brown Sugar” in terms of association, judgment, performance, imagery, feelings, and resonance dimensions.

The primary research findings are presented below

**The Study**

The research study was a descriptive study. Mixed methods study using a questionnaire was designed to collect the data.

**Sampling Design**

**Population:** Since the research was aimed at gaining brand insights from consumers of Brown Sugar and involved experience recall, people who had visited Brown Sugar in last three months were considered as population.
Sample Size: 120 millennial generation (target customers) respondents from educational institutions in Jaipur (Rajasthan) were approached who responded affirmative to qualifying question of “if they have visited Brown Sugar in last three months”.

Sampling Method: Convenience method.

Study Duration: 45 days.

Data Source: Primary Data/Secondary Data.

Sampling Technique: Non-probability purposive sampling technique was used.

Tools used for data Collection

The customer satisfaction survey was designed to collect relevant data on the lines of Kevin Lane Keller (1993, 2001, 2004, 2013) brand resonance model which proposed the steps for building a brand as depicted in Figure 1. The customised questionnaire based on Keller’s Brand Resonance Model included dichotomous questions, open ended qualitative questions like word association technique and five point likert type scale ranging from 1-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) was used to examine responses from the respondents. The data was collected using face to face interview.

![Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid](image)

Fig. 1: Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid

Source: Kevin Lane Keller, M.G. Parameswaran, Issac Jacob 2013

Tools used for data Analysis

- Reliability test was computed through Cronbach alpha to check whether data items in the questionnaire are reliable or not.
- Descriptive statistics and frequencies were calculated using SPSS.
- Content analysis was done of the qualitative responses to arrive at generalisations.
• Since already standardised factors and related questions/ statements suggested by Keller were adapted for Brown Sugar, factor analysis was not attempted and responses were analysed qualitatively.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Reliability Measure

Cronbach’s Alpha method has been applied to calculate reliability of 36 items on likert scale in the questionnaire. Reliability test measures are given below.

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<th>Reliability Statistics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>N of Items</td>
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<td>.948</td>
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<td>36</td>
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Descriptive Statistics

Thirty two percent respondents were males and 68 percent were females. The age range of respondents was 21-28 years and the mean was 22 years.

Awareness, Usage, Preference and Associations

The respondents came out with more than 40 brands of cafes, bakers and lounges to the open ended question of recall. Besides Brown Sugar, Tapri, Miss Bakers, Bakehut, Lazymojo, NIBS and Tea Connect had high recall and preference. Tapri had the highest market share in terms of patronage followed by Brown Sugar and Miss Bakers in Jaipur amongst surveyed millennials.

Brown Sugar was voted as most preferred eating joint with about 10 percent respondents followed by seven percent voting it as second best preference. Tapri and Miss Baker followed as second and third favourite places for eating out. A majority (85 percent) had visited some cafe, lounge, baker in last one month, 44 percent had visited at least two and 24 percent at least three in last month. Brown Sugar was visited by about 14 percent of respondents, Miss Bakers about seven percent and Tapri by five percent respondents in last one month. A high majority (62 percent) prefer visiting Brown Sugar for evening tea and snacks followed by lunch (18 percent).

There emerged about 35 words associated with brand Brown Sugar with maximum people associating words like cakes, coffee, delicious and fun with the brand. Other highlights were quality, fine dining, ambience, variety, cafe and pasta.

Brand Performance: The brand performance of brown sugar was judged favourable by the respondents on indicators like convenience (72 percent), quick and efficient service (65 percent), clean (81 percent), for whole family (61 percent), healthy (58 percent), delicious (67 percent), varied menu (60 percent), friendly and courteous staff (62 percent), Fun promotion (42 percent), attractive stylish look (73 percent) and quality of food (66 percent).

Brand Imagery: The image of the brand was gauged by whether consumers perceive that their aspirational group whom they admire and respect also perceive the same cafe as they do; whether they like people who eat at Brown Sugar; can they use the cafe for different
situations and if they create and recollect pleasant memories associated with the place. The brand fared only reasonably well on these dimensions of Brand Imagery. A little over half (51-58 percent in each of the dimension) rated the brand high or very high. However, about one third (35 percent) gave a neutral response indicating that they have yet to think on these lines and create a polar perception.

**Brand Judgment** - The brand Brown Sugar fared very well on brand judgement with about two third users rating it high on most indicators of brand judgement except for its distinctiveness in terms of advantages that other competitive brands cannot offer. Only one third of the surveyed respondents agreed to the statement that Brown sugar had competitive advantage over other brands. Indicators on which it received high rating on this construct was attitude towards the brand, satisfaction with the brand, recommendation to others, value for money, superior to other brands (about 63-66 percent each.)

**Brand Feelings** : The brand Brown Sugar was most associated with the feeling of self Respect (93 percent) followed by fun and social approval (88 percent each) and then warmth and sense of security/ confidence (about 81 percent) Seventy percent also rated brand as exciting. The most identified brand personality traits were Innovative, Trustworthy and Likeable (about 93 percent). Concern about customers and knowledgeable was rated positively by 80 percent respondents.

**Brand Resonance** : Brand resonance is all about the connection to the brand at all levels; sub conscious, conscious and super conscious. It is about loyalty towards the brand, connection to people patronising the same brand, loving it, living it, missing it, engaging in conversations about it, searching about it, adopting its innovations and perceiving it as an extension of self.

Brown Cafe is on a steady path of creating itself as an extension to its users. Its efforts to engage the consumers are seeing results and the brand resonance indicators indicate a positive resonance amongst customers. About 30-40 percent customers opined positively on almost all parameters. Feeling connected to other users got the least response (19 percent) and “I love Brown Sugar” got the highest response (49 percent).

**Future Plans**

To further engage and entice the customers Brown Sugar’s futuristic vision encompasses:

- **Enhance Nutritional Profile**: Brown Sugar continues to strive to find new ways to strengthen the nutritional profile of its menu items while retaining the great tastes customers expect. The group plans to serve more menu items that include fruits, vegetables, organic products and whole grains. It also plans to reduce salt, sugar, preservatives, saturated fat and calories across its menu.

- **Event Management and Destination Weddings**: To give the customers the opportunity to choose a site that has special meaning for them Brown Sugar plans to organize events and destination weddings for its customers.

- **Design Innovative Promotional Schemes**: Brown Sugar on the lines of McDonald’s Happy Meals plans to target children by providing gift packs. Apart from this, various innovative schemes for winning prizes by way of lucky draws and scratch cards are being planned for future to lure customers.
• **Utilize Social Networking Sites and Digital Technology:** Social platforms are the key mediums to tap consumers today. With an objective to engage consumers with brand Brown Sugar and build relationships with them the company visualizes to use the social media effectively in times to come. To make it more convenient for customers it plans to develop an app for smartphones as mobile application will provide an extension to their online ordering platform.

• **Focus on Employee Training & Development:** The best part of a cafe are the employees. Brown Sugar plans to introduce novel way of showing customer appreciation on lines of Pizza Hut where happy customer rings the bell on exiting from Pizza Hut and is greeted with a loud thank you from all the waiters there. Brown Sugar also plans to conduct staff development programmes with an objective to train and retain its manpower.

• **Enhancing Reach:** Brown Sugar currently has five outlets in the city and in future the company can open up more evenly spread outlets throughout the city to make it further accessible to the customers. In the long run the group plans to expand in other cities of the state and country based on feasibility study.

• **Engage in Co-creation:** Brown Sugar plans to collaborate with consumers for discussing and creating new food and beverage flavours aimed at deriving new business solutions.

**Competitive Environment**

Majority of its customers are shared with outlets operating on similar lines in the city like, Tapri, Miss Bakers, Bakehut, Lazymojo, NIBS, Bake Hut and Tea Connect. In terms of patronage all these outlets pose threat to Brown Sugar.

**Challenges Ahead for Brown Sugar**

According to Day and Schoemaker (2006), “the biggest dangers to any company are the ones you don’t see coming, and understanding these threats and anticipating opportunities-requires strong peripheral vision”. Brown Sugar is required to face the following challenges in coming times:

• Out-of-home consumption trend is increasing thus, intensifying competition the number of players in café format and restro-lounge concept is expected to increase.

• High rentals and maintaining sustained traffic on all days plagues most cafes and food joints.

• It is important to identify and analyze customer needs regularly in order to develop relevant value proposition for each segment. Customer experience is an important aspect for any retailer and Brown Sugar has to ensure the continuation of the level of customer experience and happiness of their customers.

• It is significant to identify other anchor points like offices, schools and colleges, hospitals, bus terminals, to serve customers.

• Focus on multiple channels and multiple formats are required to reach the customer.
Human resource is one of the most important components in retail business and trained & retained manpower is a challenge. Manpower needs to be cultivated, nurtured and developed to increase footfalls.

Technology upgradation is needed to keep pace with changing times like the interactive touch-screen table being tested at Pizza-Hut outlets to choose every little detail of pizza order, from the size of the pie to the toppings.

The case portrays the company's aspirations towards providing quality customer experience and services. The long-term goal is to retain existing customers, attract new customers and be a favorite eating joint for many customers. Brown Sugar has surely changed the concept of eating-out amongst the Jaipur household. “Creating memories that last a lifetime, and goodwill that lasts forever”, Brown Sugar’s success journey continues.

REFERENCES


