

THE EMERGENCE OF HOME-BAKERS AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BOOSTING SALES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

India is a country of varied culture and traditions, however this is the country which is always ready to accept, adapt and learn new things then let it be food, apparels, technology etc. It was a culture till the post-independence where the men were the head of the house and were responsible to get the earnings for the family, there is a sea change in all these traditions now, the family dynamics have changed over the years. There are a lot of technological advancements along with education what is observed these days, there is no skill or job which is restricted to a particular gender or age everyone is readily following their own passion in some way or the other, sometimes this passion or liking is also becoming a source of Income. This paper is about the emergence of Home-bakers and how the use of social media in the challenging times have helped them boost their sales. Pandemic brought the world to a standstill, but it also gave an opportunity for small time bakers and also budding entrepreneurs, to follow their passion and converting it into a business opportunity, it also saw a lot of use of social media for promotion and sales, but also faced a few challenges as lock down was declared and carrying out the task at times became difficult. This paper highlights how social media was a boon for the home-bakers.

Keywords: Home-bakers, Social Media, Pandemic, Challenges.

Introduction:

The past year was a major destruction to the world in terms of health as well as business. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the lives of people in an immense way. People recognized their skills and talents, made use of the free time and developed their skills by learning more. This situation gave a rise to many small businesses, Home-Baking is one such small start-up which flourished during the lockdown. It all started when people started baking desserts for friends and families during the lockdown period. People started following the videos and tutorials based on baking to learn and master the skill. People from all walks, housewives, students, working professionals and even the experts started a small set up from home either to relieve stress, anxiety, upgrade the skills or to start a small business.

The clientele's preferences have changed to health and hygiene as there is an increased health risk and prefer home-baked products. Home-bakers offer a variety of dessert menu starting from brownies, donuts, cheesecakes, cookies, cupcakes to customized cakes including fancy decor, edible cake toppers, floral and wedding cakes.

The pandemic has given these emerging entrepreneurs an opportunity to reach the close circles, expand their reach to the local region. The social media has played a key role in making these home bakers a success. Social Media has helped them to attract the potential customers. Furthermore, along with the business home-bakers make use of these virtual applications to conduct workshops and showcase their work.

Objectives:

- To understand the evolution of the Home-Bakers during the pandemic.
- To assess the challenges faced and measures adopted by the Home-Bakers.
- To recognize the use of Social Media for marketing of the baking businesses.

Hypothesis:

H₁: The home baking business have flourished due to the pandemic and lockdown.

H₀: The Pandemic has had no significant impact on home baking business.

H₂: The home baking business has adversities to grow and has to make necessary adjustments.

H₀: The home baking business is easy and can be managed easily without any issues.

H₃: The social media is an effective tool for marketing for a home baker.

H₀: The social media is only used for socializing and isn't much use for marketing.

Review of Literature:

Ritika Gupta, in her blog, Why Home Bakers are an edge over Commercial Bakeries (Feb, 2016) mentions that the market for high end cakes in and across the country is increasing at a very high pace. It is observed that people want customization and personalization of cakes and other baked delights as it seems to be out of the box. Home bakers have taken the market to next level for a number of reasons, such as, uncompromising quality. Home bakers ensure that all the products baked in their home-kitchen, is fresh and of good quality.

Home Bakers bake for household consumption and home baking entrepreneurs are the ones who sell their home baked products. (Seshavarthan V, et al, 2020). In a blog posted on *CNBC Make It* (March 28, 2020) titled 'Why everyone is #quarantinebaking their way through the coronavirus pandemic', Ms. Catherine Clifford states how people from all over the world have started home-baking as a stress reliever. Many have started using social media, to share their baked products and conduct a virtual conversation related to baking, with friends and families on a wide range, using the hashtags. *The Economist* (April 08, 2020) posted a blog on the Daily Chart section 'Home baking is on rise, Thanks to coronavirus lockdown' mentioning the increase in the sale of baking raw materials in France, according to Nielsen, a market research company. In an article from *The Print* (April 26, 2020) titled 'Indians in lockdown find a new passion in baking bread, and it's helping them beat the blues' by Ms. Fiza Jha, mentions that, let it be a supply chain issues or the need to overcome anxious energy, quarantined Indians are turning to the culture of baking bread. During the hard times of covid-19 pandemic it was noticed that a trend came into existence amongst the Indians – home baking. In a newspaper article from *Hindustan Times* (May 07, 2020), 'Sweet nothings: Home bakers whip up and deliver delights amid lockdown', Ms. Malika Bhagat has mentioned about the home bakers from Delhi who are facing a tough time to keep the business going on, to cater a high demand with limited resources / raw materials. Home bakers offer a special lockdown menu which consists of healthier or

keto desserts, keeping in mind the health and safety of the customers. The news article from *The Hindu* (September 17, 2020), 'Students around India are turning towards baking business: here's how' written by Ms. Padmaja Jayaram, states about the students who are utilizing the lockdown from balancing their studies and coming up with new experiments to set up a small business. In the blog from *restaurantindia.in* (October 27, 2020, 'How bakery industry is innovating during the Covid-19 pandemic', the director of Bonn Group of Industries, Mr. Amrinder Singh, has revealed about how the pandemic has helped the home bakers to get into focus and attract a number of customers. Offering healthy baked goods and unique products have assisted the home bakers to get business. The newspaper article published in *The New Indian Express* (December 25, 2020), 'Home bakers steal the show' by Ms. Deena Theresa, mentioned about the rise of home bakers and their growing business during lockdown. The home bakers who had their hands in the business even before the pandemic, noticed a great increase in their sale from mid of 2019. The increase in home bakers was also seemed to be a challenge for the ones who were already into this business, as the new home bakers offered products at a lower cost. The news article from *The Times of India* (January 02, 2021) 'Rise of the Home Bakers' stated how the pandemic and use of Social Media became a blessing for the Home Bakers. The social media has become a tool for advertisement. The pandemic had a great effect on several lives, thus to manage the stress and anxiety, people started to get into baking. In an article from *HospitalityWorld.com* from *The Economics Times* (May 17, 2021) 'The rise of home bakers amid pandemic', Ms. Sakshi Singh states about how the lockdown has pushed so many baking enthusiasts to start their own venture and convert their passion into profession. The bakery industry in India, is facing a robust growth of over 9% and was calculated to be USD 7.22 billion in 2018. It is clear that people prefer purchasing from clean, hygienic and trusted baker, for most, this could be a friend, relative or an acquaintance that they trust which automatically improves their market value. With an increase in the spirit of entrepreneurship, the scenario of home bakers in India looks quite promising. Speaking about the digital world, technology has been a big reason for this shift in the trend. A blog posted on *Barry Callebaut website*, 'Why people bake at home – Top 3 Home-baking trends' has mentioned why home baking is getting so much growth during the pandemic. This time, people utilized to bake sweets for their families and watched many baking recipes on the social media platform. The 3 main reasons for this are – Indulgence: Due to the lockdown, people tried their hands on baking. Health is the other reason/trend which has gained importance thus, people preferred home baked delicacies which offered them vegan and eggless options; Convenience is the ultimate reason. People need easy way to get their work done with high quality and quantity.

Research Methodology:

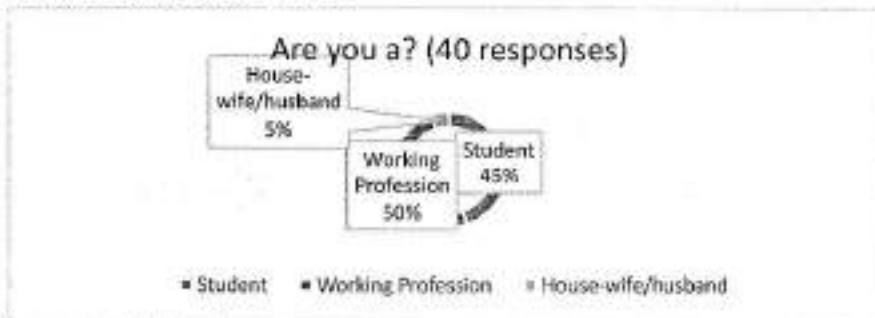
- **Primary Data:** The primary data was collected by circulating a structured questionnaire and interaction with the home bakers from all over India, majorly Pune and Mumbai. The questionnaire was circulated to 65 home bakers out of which 40 respondents gave their feedback and were able to help in the analysis of the data for the particular topic.
- **Secondary Data:** The secondary data was collected by referring various printed and published material, which was available in the form of official websites, E-paper, newspaper articles, blogs, etc.

Analysis

1. Are you a?

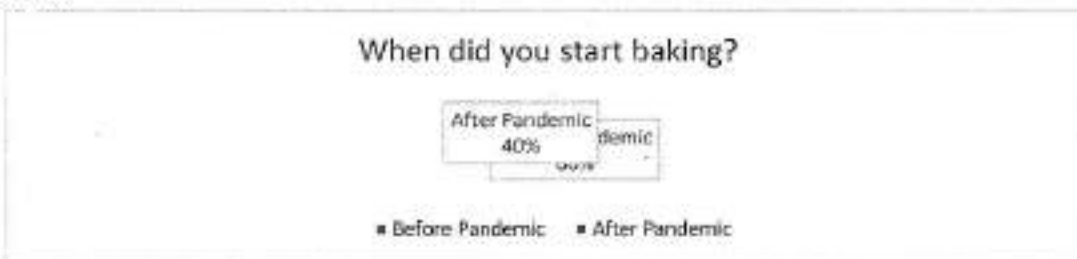
It was also a very noticeable thing that 50% of the responses (20 numbers) were working

professionals from another field. 45% (18 numbers) were students and 5% (2 numbers) were housewives who had ventured into this are



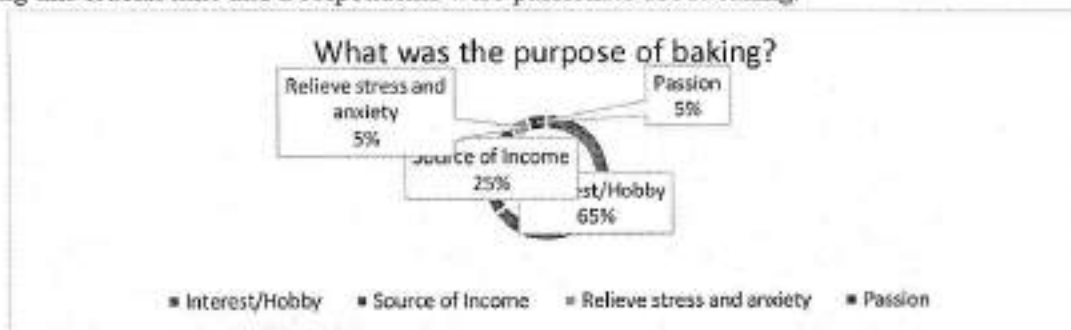
2. When did you start baking?

To identify when did the respondents actually start baking or thinking about getting into this business, the analysis for the same was 60% i.e., 24 respondents were already into this business even before the pandemic struck and 40% i.e., 16 respondents only thought or entered into the business during the pandemic.



3. What was the purpose of baking?

Out of 40 respondents 26 were doing this as this was their hobby and liking, 10 respondents had this as a source of income, 2 respondents also mentioned baking helped them to relieve stress and anxiety during this crucial time and 2 respondents were passionate about baking.



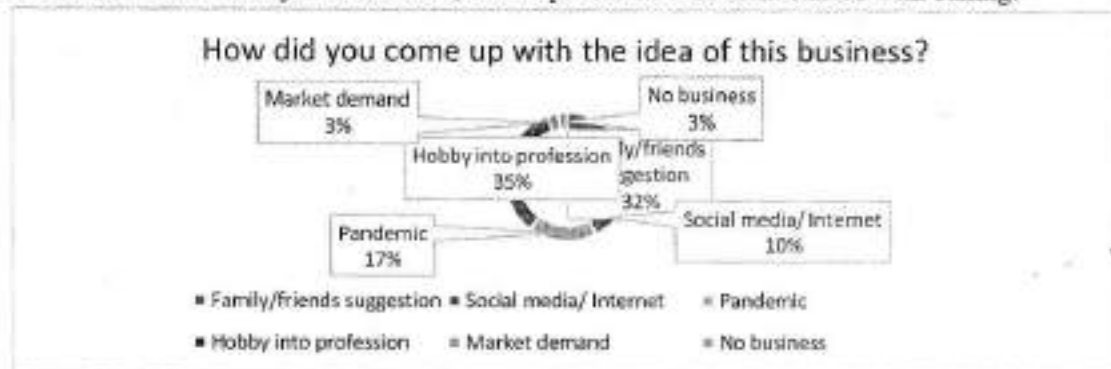
4. Have you been trained in baking?

When the part of training for this particular business arises to adapt to the skills of baking, out of 40 respondents 22 had acquired training and 18 were not actual trained in the baking.



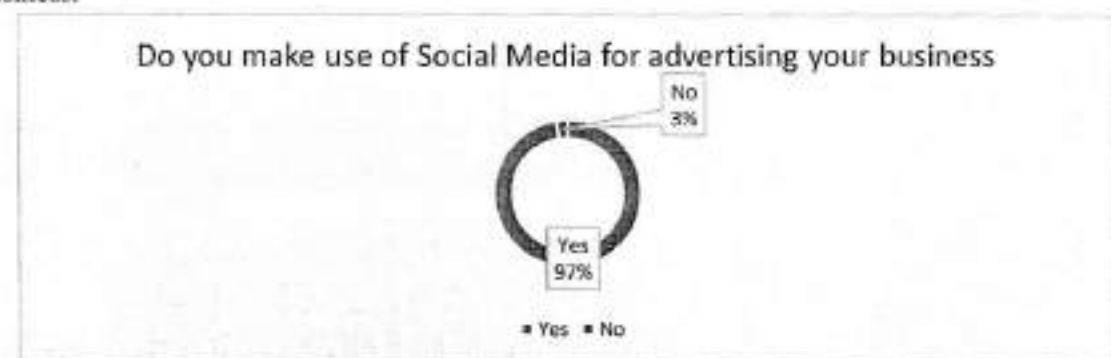
5. How did you come up with the idea of this business?

The graphical representation shows that the generation for this business came in from various sources for the respondents. 13 mentioned that the family was the motivation for them into this field, 14 of them converted their hobby into business, due to pandemic 7 of them started with baking.



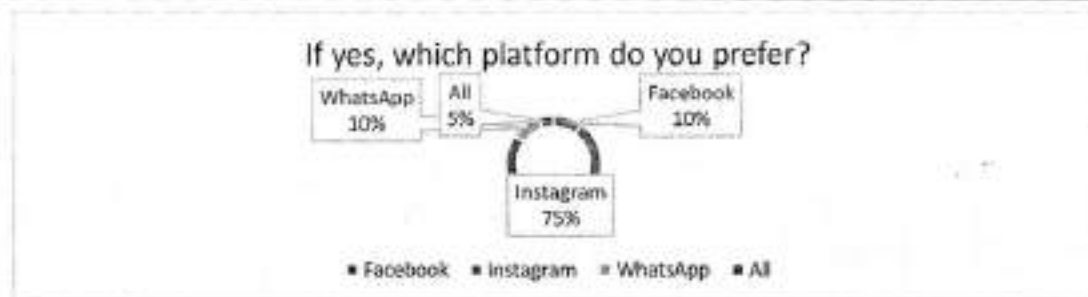
6. Do you make use of Social-Media for advertising your business?

Out of 40 respondents, 39 stated that they do use social media for the purpose of advertisement of their business.

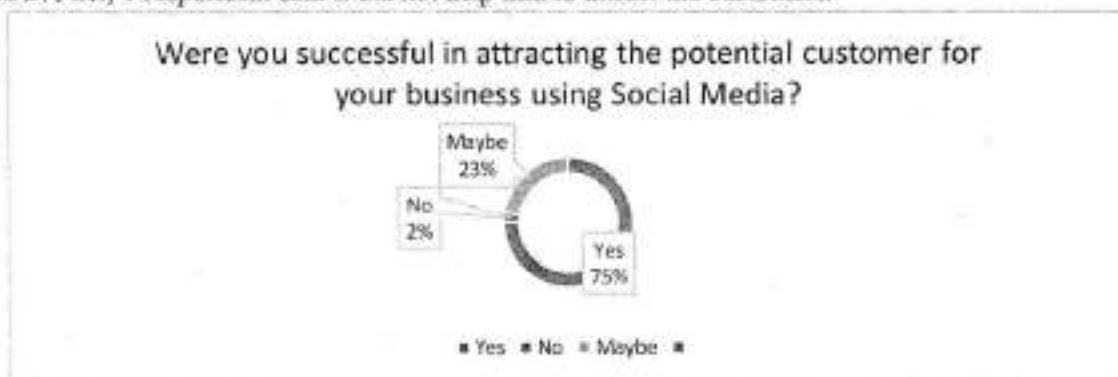


7. If yes, which platform do you prefer?

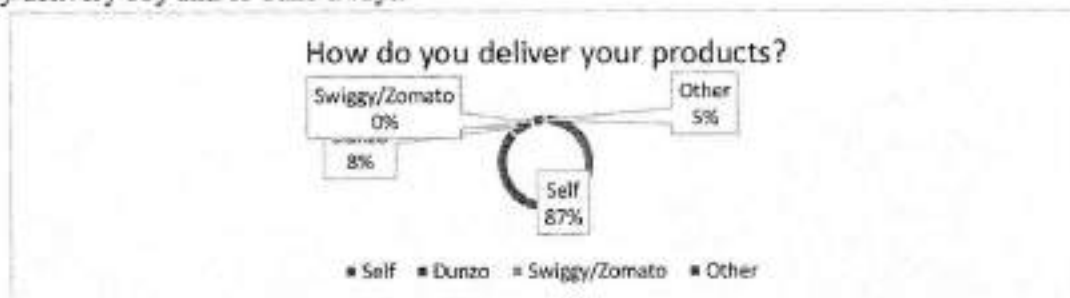
From the data collected it is seen that the respondents preferred various online platforms to showcase their products. Maximum respondents i.e., 30 numbers chose Instagram, 4 opted for Facebook, other 4 for WhatsApp and 2 of them prefer all the mentioned platforms.



8. Were you successful in attracting the potential customer for your business using social media? 75% of the total respondents (30) found that social media helped them to draw attention of their clients towards the business, 23% (9) were not sure whether it was social media that helped them in the same and 2% i.e., 1 respondent said it did not help him to attract the customers.



9. How do you deliver your products? It is clearly observed by the pie chart that most of the home-bakers (21 respondents) self-deliver their products, 2 of them use Dunzo App, 14 respondents mentioned other options such as Faito, Uber, third party/delivery boy and/or Take-aways.



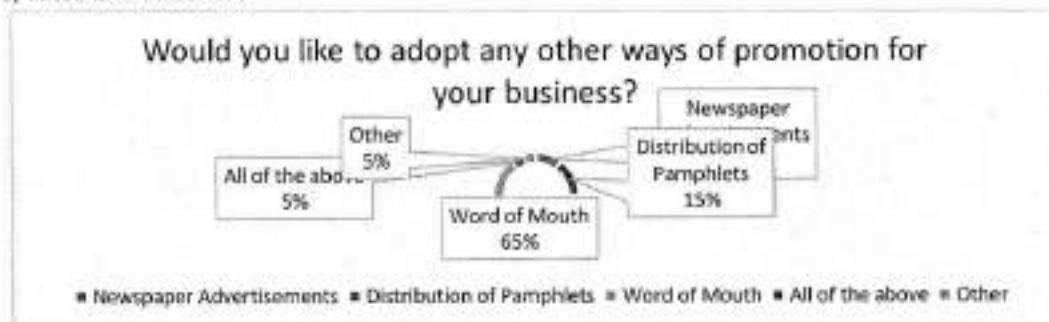
10. Who handles your Social Media business account? Most of the respondents, i.e., 97% handle their Social Media account by themselves. Only one respondent mentioned that the account was handled by his/her friend.



11. Is your business registered under Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)?
When it was asked about the registration of the business under Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, maximum respondents (23 numbers) have FSSAI license and 17 respondents do not have any food license or haven't registered for the same.



12. Would you like to adopt any other ways of promotion for your business?
When it came to different options to be used for the promotion of the business other than Social Media, the respondents chose various options. 4 respondents selected advertisement published in the newspapers, pamphlet distribution was selected by 6 respondents. Most of the respondents (26/40) chose the traditional way i.e., word of mouth as another option to promote their business. 2 respondents chose all the mentioned ways and 2 respondents gave suggestions like to promote the products in stores, cafes and bakeries.



Findings

Though many of the home bakers were into the baking business, they have seen an increase in sales

during the pandemic. The home baking community consists of people not only from hospitality profession but also from many other fields, with about 75% people being from an age group of 21-30 years. It is observed that, out of the 40 responses received, 75% are female bakers, thus, it can be interpreted as the home baking trend is a female dominated area. The home baking community is mostly people who do not hold any professional certification. In other terms, many of them are self-taught bakers. Home bakers came into the market on a larger scale due to reasons like, market need, rise in demand for healthier products like gluten free, keto diet, sugar free products. The home bakers also faced some challenges in their business, majorly was related to availability of raw material, professionalism and shortcomings of knowledge in using social media as a tool for advertisement. Social media is also used for communication with the clients and to share various recipes and baking tips with the other baking enthusiasts. Few home bakers have a third party or a delivery agencies for the delivery. Majority of the home bakers manage their social media handles on their own, however there are few bakers who outsource social media handlers. Along with social media, some traditional ways of advertisements like newspaper ads, pamphlet distribution, word of mouth and promotion of their products through other established stores is also practiced by the home bakers.

Conclusion

Home Baking as a business was existing since many decades. During the pandemic, home baking was still very ongoing business by many and welcomed by both the bakers and the consumers. This business has also seen a rise in trends related to styles, menus, presentations, themes, colour combinations, ingredients, etc. According to the NRAI Indian Food Services Report, the share of bakery and desserts in the foodservice market across different formats is 6%. And this number is likely to grow at a great pace, increasing the number of bakery shops in India. This can also be accounted to the fact that technology has enabled many home bakers to showcase their baking talents and run successful home bakeries.

In times of covid-19, many people identified their liking and skills which led them to get into this business. As every store, restaurants, etc. were shut down during this crucial time, the home bakers opened their doors for the customers. There were many reasons recorded by these home bakers to come in business such as – passion into profession, source of income, few also mentioned baking as a meditative therapy to relieve stress. The home-baking market is increasing on a greater pace with the assistance of digital marketing. Social media plays a vital role in the advertisement and promotion of the products to boost sales. The trend has now turned many enthusiasts to take up the baking as a profession for the full time.

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