

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT

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A STUDY OF DINING OUT OPTIONS OF MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES IN MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

This study tries to determine the effect of these factors on the dining out habits of middle class families in Mumbai. It studies factors such as the frequency of eating out, the per head amount spent by middle class families on eating out, the popularity of different cuisines amongst the middle class and various other factors related to this trend. The study tries to draw conclusions and give recommendations to the restaurant industry in Mumbai.

KEYWORDS

dining out, middle class, price, taste.

INTRODUCTION

Mumbai is a diverse city with many different cultures and cuisines. Dining out habits of middle class families have evolving as the Indian economy is poised for high growth rates. Everything from the preferred cuisine to the number of times they dine out and the type of restaurants they dine at, has changed. This change has been brought about due to a variety of factors, such as the growth of the middle class in India, the entry of foreign restaurant chains into India and the increasing income levels in the country.

For a middle class family, the choice of establishment to dine at, and the frequency of dining out, is dictated by several factors such as cost, cuisine, location, vegetarian or non vegetarian, reservations and health consciousness.

This study tries to determine the effect of these factors on the dining out habits of middle class families in Mumbai and tries to draw conclusions and give recommendations based on it.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study aims to find the dining out habits of middle class families in Mumbai. It studies factors such as the frequency of eating out, the per head amount spent by middle class families on eating out, the popularity of different cuisines amongst the middle class and its preference for vegetarian or non vegetarian food.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Research instruments used gauged the quality and ability of the collected data. Some of the instruments used to collect the data and formulate are as follows:-

- Questionnaire
- Informal interviews.

SAMPLING DESIGN

- A survey was conducted, consisting of a sample of randomly selected middle class people.
- Middle class has been defined as a person whose monthly income is between Rs. 20000 and Rs. 100000
- The total sampling size was 61 respondents from Mumbai city.
- Convenience Sampling has been used for conducting the survey.

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

- A sample size of 61 respondents to represent the entire city of Mumbai may not be adequate.
- The data received from some respondents in the form of informal interviews were not supported by written facts.
- The accuracy of data collected through questionnaires cannot be judged to be absolutely correct in case they may have not been telling the truth.
- The percentage column may not always add up to 100% and such a situation would imply that a certain number of respondents skipped that question or a certain number of respondents chose more than one option

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**TABLE NO. 1: INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS ON HOW OFTEN THEY EAT OUT WITH THEIR FAMILY (n=61)**

Frequency	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Never	2	3
1-2 times a week	10	16
3-4 times a week	8	13
5-6 times a week	13	21
Once a month	15	25
Few times a month	12	20
Everyday	1	2

The data shows that there is no single majority as far as the frequency of dining out is concerned. However, it is more common for people to go once or few times a week, rather than never or every day. The largest percentage of people for a single category, was the "Once a month", with 25% of respondents belonging to this category. 20% respondents said they dine out with their families few times a month and just 2% of the respondents said they dine out with their families' every day. This table shows us how often middle class families in Mumbai eat out and we can use it to find on average, how frequently a middle class family in Mumbai dines out.

TABLE NO. 2: REASON MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES DINE OUT (n=61)

Reason	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Family outing	15	25
Occasion such as birthdays, anniversaries etc	35	57
Festivals	17	28
Convenience	24	39
To try new cuisines	10	16
Other	0	0

This table shows us the various reasons middle class families have for dining out. Respondents were asked to select all those options that were applicable to them. The one reason that stood out, was, "Occasion (such as birthdays, anniversaries etc)". This shows us that when middle class families dine out, they do so usually to celebrate occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries. This could be due to the limited income of a middle class family that allows them to dine out only on occasions, as they may not be able to afford to dine out more frequently.

Other major reasons for middle class families to dine out with their families were, "Convenience", which could be derived from the fact that the family will not have to invest time and effort in cooking and can instead use the easier way and eat out.

TABLE NO. 3: HOW OFTEN MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES HAVE INDIAN FOOD WHILE DINING OUT (n=59)

Frequency	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Always	7	11
Most of the time	19	31
Sometimes	22	36
Rarely	8	13
Never	3	5

This question aims to find the preferred cuisine of middle class families in Mumbai while dining out and the popularity of a certain cuisine amongst them. Only 11% of the respondents always had Indian food while dining out. This shows us that even though Indian food is still a popular choice amongst middle class families in Mumbai, while dining out, there is a shift towards trying new cuisines as well, as their tastes develop and more options for different cuisines and new restaurants open the city.

TABLE NO. 4: HOW OFTEN MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES HAVE CHINESE FOOD WHILE DINING OUT (n=59)

Frequency	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Always	2	3
Most of the time	13	21
Sometimes	31	51
Rarely	12	20
Never	1	2

Just 3% of respondents reported that they always have Chinese food while dining out with their families, while 21% of respondents said they have it most of the time, a huge, 51% said they have it sometimes, 20% said they rarely have it and only 2% said they never have it.

Thus, we can conclude that even though Chinese food is fairly popular amongst middle class families in Mumbai, it is still not as popular as Indian or other food. However, a majority of people still have it at least sometimes and there is a definitely a market for Chinese food amongst middle class families in Mumbai.

TABLE NO. 5: HOW OFTEN MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES HAVE THAI FOOD WHILE DINING OUT (n=59)

Frequency	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Always	5	8
Most of the time	13	21
Sometimes	20	33
Rarely	10	16
Never	11	18

8% of respondents said they always have Thai food, 21% said they have it most of the time, 33% reported having it sometimes, 16% said they rarely have it and 18% said they never have it.

This is fairly surprising, as the number of Thai restaurants in Mumbai is far lesser as compared to Chinese, or Indian restaurants; however it is still quite popular, with a lot of people having it sometimes or most of the time.

TABLE NO. 6: HOW OFTEN MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES VISIT MULTI CUISINE RESTAURANTS WHILE DINING OUT (n=59)

Frequency	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Always	7	11
Most of the time	8	13
Sometimes	16	26
Rarely	17	28
Never	11	18

There is no single category that has a majority, however we see a larger number of responses in the sometimes, rarely and never category. That being said, there is still a fair number of people who always or most of the time, choose to dine at a multi cuisine restaurant. Hence, there could be demand for multi cuisine restaurants in Mumbai, but it will be less as compared to restaurants with single cuisines such as Indian or Italian.

TABLE NO. 10: VEGETARIAN OR NON-VEGETARIAN PREFERENCE WHILE DINING OUT

Preference	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Vegetarian	18	30
Non-Vegetarian	38	62

30% of the respondents said they prefer vegetarian food while dining out whereas 62% said they prefer non-vegetarian food while dining out. Hence we can infer that in some traditional families only vegetarian food would be cooked at home so the younger generation would be enjoying non vegetarian food while dining out.

TABLE NO. 11: AMOUNT SPENT PER HEAD BY THE FAMILY WHILE DINING OUT (n=58)

Amount	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Less than Rs 100	4	7
Rs 100-300	7	11
Rs 300-500	27	44
Rs 500 -1000	13	21
More than Rs1000	7	11

Here we try to analyze how much a middle class family usually spends per head while dining out. Only 7% of respondents spend less than a 100 rupees, per head, 11% spend between 100 and 300 rupees per head, 44% spend 300 to 500 rupees per head, 21% spend between 500 and 1000 rupees per head and 11% spend more than a 1000 rupees per head while dining out with their families.

Hence we can see that the 300 to 500 rupee range is the most popular amount amongst all the options. Considering an average middle class family includes 4 or 5 members, means that the average bill amount for a middle class family that is dining out in Mumbai is approximately Rs. 2000.

TABLE NO. 12: PREFERRED CHOICE OF ESTABLISHMENT TO DINE OUT AT (n=61)

Choice of establishment	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Five star hotel	11	18
Family restaurants	38	62
Fast food restaurants	20	33
Udipi restaurant	19	31
Dhaba	18	30
Street food	21	34
Food court	20	33
Other	0	0

This table shows us the popularity of various types of dining establishments amongst middle class families in Mumbai. Respondents were asked to choose all the options that applied to them. The most popular choice is family restaurants, with 62% respondents reporting eating there, followed by street food with 34% dining there, and then fast food restaurants and food courts, with 33% each. The least popular choice was five star hotels, with only 18% reporting that they ate there.

TABLE NO. 13: FACTORS CONSIDERED WHILE CHOOSING A RESTAURANT (n=61)

Factors	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Location	27	44
Health	13	21
Cuisine	34	56
price	25	41
Speed of service	26	43
Discount/coupons /loyalty programs	10	16
Other	0	0

This table studies the factors that affect the choice of restaurants for middle class families in Mumbai. Respondents picked all the factors that affected them. The key factor was cuisine, with 56% of respondents choosing it as a factor. The second most important factor was location followed by speed of service, and then price. Some of the less important factors were health and discounts, coupons or loyalty programs.

TABLE NO. 14: PREFERENCE OF TRYING NEW PLACES OR STICKING TO THE SAME PLACES WHILE DINING OUT (n=56)

Preference	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Same restaurant	15	25
New restaurants	41	67

As far as customer loyalty amongst middle class families in Mumbai with respect to their dining out preferences is concerned, only 25% said they would prefer eating at the same restaurants, whereas a larger, 67% said they would prefer trying a new restaurant. Hence we can see that customers in this segment are not very loyal, and are willing to try new places.

TABLE NO. 15: IMPORTANCE OF VALET PARKING (n=57)

Response	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Very important	5	8
Important	23	38
Not very important	21	34
Not important	8	13

Valet parking was considered as somewhat important, with 38% respondents calling it important and 34% saying it was not very important. Only 8% of respondents said it was very important and 13% said it was not important. This could even help us understand how many people drive themselves when they come to restaurants, as opposed to taking public transport or having a driver.

TABLE NO. 16: HOW OFTEN MIDDLE CLASS FAMILIES MAKE A RESERVATION WHEN DINING OUT WITH FAMILY (n=58)

Frequency	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Always	4	7
Usually	19	31
Sometimes	24	39
Never	11	18

Here we try to analyze whether middle class families in Mumbai make a reservation while dining out or not. 7% said they always make a reservation, 31% said they usually make a reservation, 39% said they make a reservation sometimes and 18% said they never make a reservation, while dining out with their families.

TABLE NO. 17: PREFERENCE OF AMBIENCE OR FOOD (n=53)

Preference	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Ambience	24	39
Food	29	48

48% respondents said they go to a restaurant more for the food than for the ambience, whereas 39% of respondents said they go to a restaurant for the ambience rather than for the food. Hence we can see that both, ambience are food are important to a middle class family, with food being slightly more important than the ambience.

TABLE NO. 18: IMPORTANCE OF PRICE WHILE DINING OUT (n=60)

Degree of importance	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Very important	9	15
Important	23	38
Not very important	22	36
Not important	6	10

Almost equal number of respondents said price was important/not very important. No clear conclusion can be drawn from this.

TABLE NO. 19: IMPACT OF OFFERS AND DEALS ON ATTRACTING FAMILIES TO RESTAURANTS (n=55)

Degree of importance	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Yes	24	39
No	31	51

Of the respondents, 39% said they are attracted by offers and deals at restaurants, and offers and deals do entice them to go to certain restaurants over others, whereas 51% said they are not attracted by offers and deals at restaurants.

TABLE NO. 20: PREFERENCE OF BUFFETS OR AL A CARTE (n=51)

Preference	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Buffet	11	18
A la carte	40	66

The respondents showed a clear preference for a la carte over buffets at a restaurant, with 66% respondents choosing a la carte, whereas only 18% chose buffets.

TABLE NO. 22: DECISION MAKER ON WHERE TO DINE OUT (n=59)

Decision maker	No of responses	Percentage of responses
Kids	17	28
Wife	11	18
Husband	22	36
Grandparents	9	15

In this table we can see who the decision makers are when it comes to choosing where the family goes out to eat. This can mean that targeting advertisements at the decision maker can influence where the family goes out to eat.

The husbands were the major decision makers, with the husbands deciding in 36% of the cases. This was followed by the children, who were the decision makers in 28% of the cases. Then came the wives, who were the decision makers in 18% of the cases, and lastly the grandparents who made the decision in 15% of the cases.

CONCLUSION

Hence, to conclude about the dining habits of middle class families in Mumbai, we can say that they usually dine out as a family once or few times a month.

- They primarily dine out on occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries, but they also dine out for convenience and as a family outing or during festivals.
- They prefer Indian cuisines while dining out, but even Chinese and Thai cuisines are fairly popular.
- Non-vegetarian food is more popular amongst the middle class in Mumbai while dining out.
- The amount spent per head by middle class families in Mumbai depends on their income and social standing. Most respondents said they spend between Rs. 300 and Rs. 1000 per head per meal. A majority of those reported spending between Rs. 300 to Rs. 500 per head per meal when they dine out. Considering that an average family will consist of four or five members, middle class families spend around Rs. 1500 to Rs. 2000 per meal when they dine out with their families
- When it comes to the choice of establishment to eat at, family restaurants were the most popular choice and five star restaurants were the least popular choice amongst the middle class families in Mumbai. Street food, fast food restaurants, food courts, dhabas and udipi restaurants were also fairly popular.
- As far as the factors concerned when it came to choosing where the family ate at, middle class families looked at the cuisine, location and price more than other factors such as health and discounts.
- Middle class families in Mumbai are not loyal customers when it comes to dining out in Mumbai, and majority of the respondents said they prefer trying a new restaurant than visiting the same restaurant again.
- Valet parking at a restaurant was not rated as very important by most of the people, and in general people rated it as important or not very important.
- Most middle class families usually or sometimes made a reservation while dining out and hardly any always made a reservation.
- While dining out, food was more important than the ambience for middle class families, however ambience was also quite important for most respondents.
- Price was rated as important or not very important, by most respondents.
- Offers and deals at restaurants attracted around 39% of respondents, whereas the rest claimed they were not attracted by it.
- Most respondents said they prefer a la carte to buffets when they dine out.
- Lastly, the husband or the children in the family were most likely to decide where the family dined.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Dining out of middle class families is increasing and it would pay entrepreneurs to cater to this market
- The restaurants serving the middle class should also have non vegetarian items on their menu as traditional households may not cook it at home and this is a growing market.
- This is a price sensitive market and customers look for reasonable price and good taste rather than ambience.
- Such restaurants need not incur expenditure on valet parking facilities.
- It would be worthwhile to offer a la carte rather than buffet.

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