

From Innovation to Market Leadership: A Case Study of iD Fresh Foods' Business Strategy

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Abstract: *The ready - to - cook (RTC) segment has revolutionized the landscape of the packed food domain with its disruptive innovation and product offerings. With the advancement in technology to preserve and lock the natural flavors of foods and with the potential to possess the taste as close to eating a freshly prepared homemade delicacy, these RTC products have contributed significantly to the spike in demand and customer loyalty. This work emphasizes presenting the RTC space and how this segment has been a launchpad for 'iD Fresh Foods', a famous company that has been thriving seamlessly, rising to glory at international levels. The brand's strategies and its driving factors to help the company achieve various milestones are discussed in detail.*

Keywords: Ready - to - cook, innovation, competency, tradition, authenticity, iD Fresh Foods

1. Introduction to the RTC segment

The prevalence of ready - to - cook products has become quite popular in a diverse nation like India, bringing about a change in how people prepare and enjoy their meals. These products are known for their convenience and simplicity, offering a range of packaged ingredients and partially prepared dishes that significantly reduce the time and effort required for cooking. This industry has grown remarkably with unique choices and preferences as it caters to changing lifestyles, evolving needs, and the desire for delicious dining experiences.

India with its diverse food culture has witnessed a surge in the availability of ready - to - cook products across various cuisines catering to the tastes of a large and discerning population.

With people craving for convenience and a fast - paced lifestyle, these ready - to - cook products have been a boon to many working professionals and other segments of people with a busy lifestyle.

Indian cuisine is well known for its recipes that involve a variety of spices, herbs, and complex cooking techniques. However, due to urbanization more women joining the workforce, and changing family dynamics there is a growing demand for meal solutions. Ready - to - cook products have emerged as a solution to these challenges by bridging the gap between tradition and modernity.

The growing need and demand for these RTC products have paved the way for so many players to run their businesses lucratively. some of the major players in the domain are:

MavalliTiffinRoom (MTR) Foods: Started in the year 1924, this is south India's oldest and one of the most infamous brands which also is a giant in the ready - to - cook segment. With its wide array of product offerings like ready to cook - lemon rice, bisi - bele bath, kadaipaneer, poha, rasam and so many more, this has made its way into people's kitchen shelves, seeking quick foods infused with the taste of tradition and richness of flavors.

ITC Limited: With a variety of ready - to - cook products ranging from breakfast, gourmet, biryani, and chutney, to dessert delights they have a vast product offering making them a significant player in the RTC sector, catering to both local and international markets.

Haldiram's: This brand has emerged into gained popularity in the snacking domain of ready - to - eat food fragments and has umpteen flavors and age - old recipes under their brand making them a favorite snacking brand in India and Globally. India being a land of versatility and various eating habits, traditions, and recipes, has been a launch pad for many such companies to introduce new variants to the global markets, thus gaining momentum in the market.

iD Fresh Food's foray into the world of RTC:

'iD Fresh Foods' was the brainchild of Mr. P. C Mustafa, who founded this company along with his four cousins delving into the 'ready to cook' food segment in the year 2005. This company is headquartered in the Silicon City – Bangalore. The founder hailing from Kerala, identified a business opportunity in the bustling city of Bangalore owing to the busy lifestyle of people contributing to them struggling with finding time to cook. He also understood that people living in metropolitan cities with hectic lifestyles would welcome and use these products as people here chose convenience^{[1] [2]}.

The company made its foray by launching its first – ever ready - to - cook idly - dosa batter. The company also gets its name derived from idly - dosa batter known as 'iD', where 'i' stands for idly and 'D' stands for dosa. This successful launch was the result of many experiments and initial failures which paved the path for successful fermentation process, techniques, and composition enhancement in an organic way.

iD's success story is an amalgamation of myriad parameters and business strategies, which are rooted in their core competencies such as strategies, product offerings & innovation, technology, and STP (segmentation, targeting, positioning) of the brand.

iDFresh Foods has carved itself deeply in Indian and International households driven by a set of solid ethics, culture, innovation, and world - class standards.

This section uncovers the striking factors that have given the company a competitive edge for massive success. The core competency of the company is to provide organic, safe, hygienic, and tasty food that can be savored effortlessly.

Some of the unmatched competitive features and Unique Selling Propositions of the company are discussed as follows:

Values: The brand iD resonates with the values inscribed in every bit of the work they put into right from choosing the best quality ingredients, to procedural etiquettes to delivering to their customers' expectations. It's the values of tradition, authenticity, and promise that gets translated into the food they prepare.

Freshness and authenticity: The freshness and superior quality of ingredients is the base for the company's credibility. The demand for their organic processes, hygienic manufacturing processes, preservative - free products, and commitment towards providing healthier and convenient ready - to - cook products is edged to be their core competency, as they promise to deliver products tasting as good as a home - made delicacy and healthier.

One product at a time: The company converges its focus points on just one product at once, in which they do the 360 - degree product research, market gap, consumers' preferences, and the demand for a product to suit the requirements accordingly. They first launched the idly - dosa batter and their target market was mainly consumers from south of India. They slowly put their hands into launching other products like paratha, chapati, vada batter, and so on.

Recipes: They follow traditional recipes and procedures to make their products, free from chemicals and toxic substances. They have expertise in preparing classic South Indian dishes using time - tested recipes infused with conventional taste and top - notch ingredients.

Innovation: iD Fresh Foods has been betting big on innovation in many realms:

Design: The company was the pioneer in being innovative in designing their products with a unique shaping to make the process of storing very convenient for storing locking and refrigerating. This strategy propelled the company to outbeat its competitors in the market, gaining more popularity. This also includes larger - than - life campaigns and disruptive design innovation.

Technology: The company predominantly uses four technology systems: HRMS systems, Microsoft Power BI analytics, SAP for ERP, and Bizom for sales force automation. The store - wise, predictive analytics helps iD attain and sustain this model. They started their own supply chain and distribution system and built their own "Just in Time" inventory model that helped to forecast the sales, and returns and optimize production. The software features geo -

fencing that uses RFID technology or GPS. It was developed to identify geographical boundaries thereby helping to connect with their staff and customers. This technology has helped to track their supplies and to ensure their timely availability and decision - making based on the updated sales data.

Logistics: They have innovated and revamped their logistics chain by implementing the equipment and machinery to carry the pre - fermentation process along the way during transportation to save time, effort, and unnecessary expenses.

Choosing the right customers and right location strategy: In response to the massive customer demand for iD Fresh's Filter coffee, which saw a month - on - month growth of 85%, the company has also launched its very first e - commerce iD store. Going digital and embracing technology boosts the company's efficiency and allows it to serve its customers better. As of today, about 15 - 17% of their total business turnover comes through the E - commerce platform across major cities.

"iD runs on IT. We are not just a batter company, we are a fresh food distribution company that runs on technology" - Musthafa PC.

2. Conclusion

The ready - to - cook and ready - to - eat segments have been very predominant in today's time owing to the stressful lifestyle. This has given birth to several companies to serve their customers with safe, healthy, hygienic, and tasty foods that are ready in under a few minutes. A wide variety of these products entering the market has also made people vouch for them to not only satiate their cravings for delicious foods but also maintain their health with these organically made food products. The implementation of technology - powered processes has significantly reduced food wastage by 20 - 30% by maintaining precision in forecasting which is up to 30%.^[6]

This work accentuated the prevalence of RTC foods and how iDFresh Foods caters to its consumers at national and international levels with its market leadership. The constant market research, innovation, and technical advancements have contributed to their massive accomplishment via Unique Selling Proposition (USP), despite tight competition from other giants in the RTC segment.

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