

■ Prasenjit Chakraborty

It is a well-reckoned fact that the market dynamics is not the same for different segments. What determines the market dynamics are consumers' preferences, target audience, price, packaging, taste, aesthetics, etc. Depending on these factors, marketers or companies select their strategies. Such strategies by and large determine the fate of a product or success of a company. When it comes to food sector, it is more difficult.

In the Indian context, food habit or preference for food varies every few kilometres. It is because of the vastness and multi-ethnic culture of India. The task is even more arduous when any MNC tries to popularise a particular category of

frozen foods in consumers' lives through education and product experience. "This will be our focus to grow the category," says Ritu Mukherji, Marketing Manager, McCain Foods India Pvt Ltd.

Localisation is the cornerstone of McCain's strategy in India. "We continuously work with our customers/chefs and keep track of the evolving trends. And based on the assessed requirements, we attempt to develop customised products and solutions. Our *Aloo Tikki*, *Veggie Burger*, *Masala fries* are some of the successful innovations," claims Mukherji.

The research and development arm of McCain is continuously engaged in trials of new products and developing new applications for foodservice. Mukherji strongly believes that it is only a matter of

also conducted cross-category promotions to bring more consumers into the fold of frozen foods. For instance, in Delhi, McCain has tied up with several Resident's Welfare Associations (RWAs) and has been conducting in-home kitty parties to reach out to homemakers.

To accelerate trials, it has reduced the price barrier. Introduction of McCain trial packs at ₹ 29 enables the consumers to try out the products like *French fries*, *Smiles* and *Aloo Tikki*. "Frozen foods are a low penetration category and require continuous efforts and engagement with consumers. We are, therefore adopting a 360° integrated marketing approach to establish *McCain* as the preferred brand in the frozen food category," asserts Mukherji.

Localised approach by a global player

Leveraging on the popularity of potatoes in India, McCain Foods – globally known for its French fries and potato products – made a mark in the Indian market through its range of frozen food products. Adopting right business strategies in terms of pricing, customisation, distribution, etc has been the secret behind its success.

food, which is at a nascent stage in India. In this backdrop, the US-based McCain – the world's largest manufacturer of frozen potato products – has adopted several strategies in India to popularise RTE and RTC foods. McCain offers product solutions for foodservice and variety of options for home consumption.

India-specific strategies

The concept of frozen foods in India is still evolving, though the demand for such food is increasing gradually in India. In this direction, McCain has tailored products to local preferences, and expanded the frozen food distribution network to make its products widely available at multiple retail points. It is also creating relevance for

time and efforts towards promoting the experience of frozen foods through trials that will lead to accelerated growth of the category. McCain is today actively engaged in organising large-scale samplings at the point of sale, foodshows, consumer exhibitions, and conducting customised consumer contact programmes in various cities to enhance trials as well as provide impetus to adoption of frozen foods. It has

FROZEN FOOD TITBITS

- ❑ QSR infusing growth
- ❑ Customisation is key
- ❑ Large-scale sampling must
- ❑ Rapid growth in metros
- ❑ Adequate cold chain is required

RTE & RTC spin magic

According to Mukherji, in the last few years, consumers in India have gone through a dramatic transformation in lifestyle by moving from traditional spending on food and groceries to lifestyle and convenience food products, thus leading to the entry of frozen foods in their shopping basket. "The relevance of McCain frozen foods is growing with consumers appreciating the benefit of being able to create a freshly made hot snack, in a matter of minutes (from the freezer to the plate) in addition to the convenience of stocking them in the freezer for use anytime," she says. This is evident by the rise in the number of frozen food products being offered in the Indian market today.

Quick service restaurants have equally contributed to the growth of frozen foods where standardisation and consistent quality are important factors for success. "However, frozen foods are still a new category for Indian consumers and they are slowly getting familiar with it. McCain has worked in similar markets earlier, and we believe the key to grow in such markets is to offer a range of high-quality affordable frozen food products adapted to local taste and made available close to consumers," points out Mukherji.

In service

Adoption of India-specific strategies provides myriad benefits to McCain. "Today, our local range of frozen food offerings is growing well, and products with local tastes are registering good acceptance and, thereby good growth," says Mukherji. *Aloo Tikki*, the most popular of McCain's local product, introduced in July 2008, is growing rapidly in the retail channel whereas *Veggie Burger* category has enabled McCain to enter new

foodservice segments like cinemas, bakery in addition to the quick service restaurant business. Besides *Aloo Tikki*, *Chilli Garlic Potato Bites* is also growing well.

The preference for local range cuts across cities and the growth is rapid in metros, while that in the non-metros is still evolving. Another breakthrough innovation is of McCain 3-minute *Idli* for the foodservice segment. Made of real rice and lentils, the product offers great convenience as it can be prepared in the microwave in just three minutes. "The product has been well-accepted by chefs for its superior taste and texture," proudly says Mukherji.

Looking at the potential offered by the Indian market, McCain is continuously evaluating growth opportunities in the Indian market. It realises that variety, affordability, availability, and differentiation through innovation and brand-building will be the key pillars of its marketing strategies to expand and grow in the market. Furthermore, McCain is continuously expanding its distribution network and



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improving availability. McCain Foods India has been adjudged among top 20 exporters (processed vegetables) by APEDA for the period 2010-2011. "While on one hand, we are strengthening the distribution to tap uncovered areas and segments in large cities, on the other, we are also continuously exploring new markets as long as we have a cold chain network to support it," concludes Mukherji. ■

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