

Maggi in a Muddle

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Abstract

Nestle has a century old history in India. Though known for its milk products initially, Nestle India shot into imagination of the Indian customers with the introduction of its marquee brand, Maggi instant noodles. “2 minutes noodle” was a metaphor for the modern India and caught the imagination of upwardly mobile Indians, career mothers and children alike.

But then, this fairy tale came to a naught on 5 June 2015 when the food regulator in India, FSSAI, banned Maggi on the charges of presence of lead and MSG in excess of permissible limits in Maggi. With this, Nestle India underwent losses, direct and consequential. Surprisingly, Nestle chose to seek judicial remedy instead of compromising with the authorities. The courts of India upheld the case of Nestle and held that FSSAI had acted in an arbitrary manner and did not follow the principles of natural justice when it banned the nine variants of Maggi noodles. Following clearance of Maggi Noodle by accredited laboratories in India, Nestle re-launched Maggi on 9 November 2015.

Why did Nestle get into this muddle? How did get out of this muddle? What have been the strategies of Nestle in dealing with the crisis and what are the ethical considerations while dealing with such a situation is the essence of this contemporary research work. This is paper is based on secondary data available on the internet and periodicals.

Keywords: Maggi, Nestle, Fast food, Convenience, Lead, MSG, FSSAI, Strategy, Ethics

“When I started looking to rent a one-bedroom apartment in Bombay about two-and-a-half years ago, I had a short list of specifications: 1. It needed to be semi-furnished. 2. I needed ceilings high enough that I wouldn’t have to crouch. 3. I needed at least some natural light. 4. I needed a kitchen.

It was this last request that flummoxed my brokers. I saw several places that had a mini-fridge and a single hot plate in lieu of a kitchen. When I explained I needed someplace to cook, the broker would look at me and say, ‘Yes, you can cook. Chai and Maggi.’” (Snyder, 2015)

Introduction

As the above vignette indicates, India may be a land of a thousand cuisines, but Indians unite effortlessly over Maggi and Chai (Editor, 2014). Maggi, the great unifier of sorts, had come under clouds for about five months since June 2015 and as we write the final lines of this paper in November 2015, the clouds are clearing. This is the story of rise, fall and resurrection of Maggi, the marquee brand of Nestle India.

Uttar Pradesh FDA¹ ordered on the 30 April 2015 recall of Maggi, instant noodle from Nestle, on the charges of excessive lead and MSG² content in the samples tested. FSSAI¹ passed an order on 5 June 2015 directing that Maggi be withdrawn from the shelves of the stores all over India until results of further tests are available. This led to huge brand loss and monetary loss to Nestle India, the owner of Maggi brand.

Why did Maggi get into this muddle? What went wrong? How did Nestle get out of this muddle? This paper is an attempt at addressing these questions.

This paper is organized as follows: Firstly, the history and genesis of fast food is established. Secondly, it is established that the question is not that of “do we need fast food or convenience food” but the question is “how”. The larger question of societal roles is then discussed. Thirdly, tracing the history of Nestle India and Maggi, the question of “Why did Maggi get into this muddle” is taken up. Fourthly, the strategies that Maggi has adopted to get out of the muddle are highlighted. The paper concludes with remarks on the strategies of Nestle and the way forward for the instant food industry in India.

Instant foods like instant noodles (such as Maggi) are the metamorphosed version of the concept of fast food concept (Reifkind, 2012) and therefore, as the first step, a study of evolution of Fast Food in the West and in India is undertaken.

Evolution of Fast Food in the West

Fast food has a long history in the West, especially the United States of America (USA). The extraordinary growth of the fast food industry is an outcome of the all-American way of life. Between 1970 and 2000, fast food has infiltrated every nook and cranny of American society. In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food; in 2001, they spent more than \$110 billion (Schlosser, 2001). What people eat (or don't eat) has always been determined by a complex interplay of social, economic, and technological forces. The extraordinary growth of the fast food industry has been driven by fundamental changes in American society.

The popularity of fast food the world over is due to the changing value system, none to cook at home, time being swapped for money, no time, speed, speed, and, speed...

Fast Food in India

Fast food is not a new idea, especially in India. Samosa, Vada Pav, Mint Chutney vegetable sandwich, Bajia / Pakora, Tikki ka chat, Bhel puri, Pav Bhaji are all examples of Indian fast food not only because they can be prepared quickly but also because they are in fact, the Indian equivalent of Western fast food. They are all key players in India's vibrant street food culture and hawkers and vendors country-wide, do brisk business cooking and selling them (Sarkar, 2015).

With Indians going upwardly mobile and being exposed to tastes from other parts of the world, they are acquiring new tastes. Consumers in urban areas such as Mumbai,

Bengaluru frequent fast food outlets for 'on-the-go-consumption' or as a quick alternative to a regular meal. In contrast, a major bulk of consumers in tier II and tier III visited fast food outlets to enjoy the dining-out experience at affordable prices. To leverage on consumers' preferences, fast food players continued to expand their menu offerings to attract a diverse set of consumers varying from the price conscious to consumers looking for greater variety (Euromonitor International, 2015).

Many companies, both domestic and multi-national have leveraged these changing life styles and to some extent, contributed to this change in life styles.

Fast Food to Instant Food

Of late, while many people would say "No" to Fast Food (they are too greasy, no dietary fibres, no nutrients etc.), they want "Instant Food". What is instant food? It is the food that you don't have to do anything to, except to pay for it, open a package, or heat it up. Dip it hot water and it is ready in "two minutes"! There may be plenty of food to prepare which they concede is good, but takes too long a time! They want their food instantly (Reifkind, 2012).

As mentioned earlier, instant foods like instant noodles (such as Maggi) are the metamorphosed version of the concept of fast food concept and the instant food under discussion in this paper is noodle; noodle as a snack, quick breakfast and why, even a quick lunch!

Though there are many companies such as Nestle India (with its brand “Maggi”), ITC (with its brand “Yippe!”), HUL (with its “Knorrr”), GlaxoSmithKline (with its “Horlicks Foodles”), and Nestle is the undisputed leader with nearly 63% market share (Knowledge@Wharton, 2015) in the noodle market, it is but natural that everyone’s eyes, including that of regulators, are on Nestle.

Let us now turn toward Nestle India and learn as to how it grew into being the market leader and got into this “taste bhi, trouble bhi” mode.

Nestle India

NESTLÉ’s relationship with India dates back to 1912, when it began trading as The NESTLÉ Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Company (Export) Limited, importing and selling finished products in the Indian market. Post Indian independence, Nestle set-up production in India and NESTLÉ India is a subsidiary of NESTLÉ S.A. of Switzerland. Nestle India Ltd was incorporated in the year 1956. NESTLÉ India owns brand names such as NESCAFÉ, MAGGI, MILKYBAR, KIT KAT, BAR-ONE, MILKMAID and NESTEA (Nestle, 2015). Nestle India Ltd, which was incorporated in the year 1956, had market capitalisation of Rs 59,508 crores as 06 November 2015 (India Infoline, 2015). With eight factories and a large number of co-packers, Nestlé India is a vibrant Company that provides consumers in India with products of global standards and is committed to long-term sustainable growth and shareholder satisfaction. The Company insists on honesty, integrity and fairness in all aspects of its

business and expects the same in its relationships. This had earned it the trust and respect of every strata of society that it comes in contact with and is acknowledged amongst India's 'Most Respected Companies' and amongst the 'Top Wealth Creators of India' (Nestle India, 2015).

Maggi

Maggi is simply ubiquitous in India. Maggi, it is needless to say, is an instant noodle (in fact, "Two Minutes" Noodle!) brand of Nestle India. Instant noodles are a precooked and usually dried noodle block, sold with flavouring powder and/or seasoning oil, usually in a separate packet; though in the case of cup noodles the flavouring is often loose in the cup. Dried noodle blocks are cooked or soaked in boiling water; some instant noodle products are seal packed—these can be reheated or eaten straight from the packet (Anonymous, 2015).

The Birth of Maggi Noodles

Maggi noodle was first introduced on the market in India by Nestle India in 1983 they instantly caught the nation's imagination. The "two-minute noodles" advertising campaign on state-run television with which Maggi launched itself turned out to be an instant attraction because of its liberating message for women, which was the mood in the 80s in India. Nestle intelligently en-cashed on the idea that the "Maggi Mom" was not only seen as loving and caring of her children as her mother was of her, but she was also able to juggle her workplace and domestic responsibilities because of the snack. (Bhattacharyya, 2015).

The Lord Rules for Two Decades

Maggi noodles first appeared on the market here in 1983, and over the next 25 years, they enjoyed a 90% of the instant noodle market (that share has dropped in the last few years, thanks to the introduction of other brands like Top Ramen and Wai Wai) (Snyder, 2015). (See **Figure 1**).

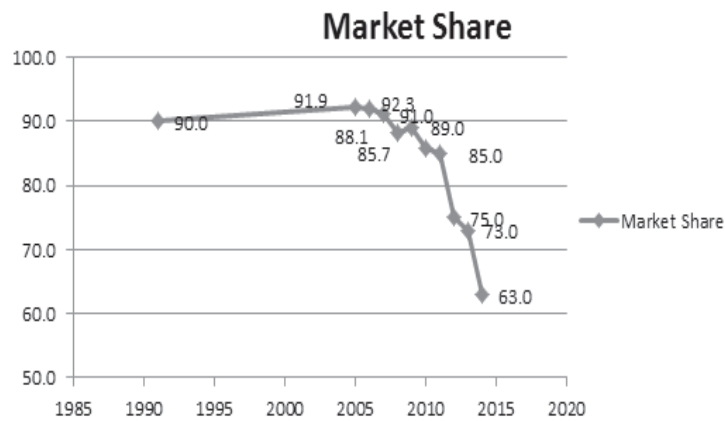


Figure 1: Market Share of Maggi over the Years

(Source: (Gayathri, 2012) and other research websites)

Top Ramen from Indo Nissin has been the oldest contender to Maggi's lordship of Indian market. Maggi has 70 per cent share of Rs 3800 Crore instant noodle market with a value growth of 7.4 per cent and volume growth of 2.9 per cent. Maggi brand accounts for 30 per cent of Nestlé's Rs 9500 Crore annual sales (TNN, 2015).

When it comes to customer reach and brand value, Maggi, the line of noodles, instant soups and seasonings owned

by Nestle, has been mentioned in the same breath along with such big names as Coca-Cola and Colgate. In one such survey focusing on Indian brands, by Millward Brown, Maggi was ranked No. 18 with a valuation of \$1.127 billion. According to a Euromonitor report, Maggi accounted for 63% of India's noodle sales during the year 2014-15 (Knowledge@Wharton, 2015).

Nestlé India Ltd is the leader in the noodle market with a 63% market value share with its Maggi brand was the most entrenched instant noodle brand in India in 2014. This is mainly because of its widespread distribution network and consumer loyalty towards it for being a pioneer in the noodle category in India. Noodle industry is expected to grow at a constant 2014 price value CAGR of 7% (Euromonitor International, 2015).

Competition

ITC Foods' Sunfeast Yippee has garnered 18-20% of the market. Hindustan Unilever, which markets Knorr soupy noodles, holds the balance share with other brands (TNN, 2015). Competition from the traditional rivals such as ITC, HUL and Knorr have been dealt exhaustively in marketing literature (See, for example, "Maggi Mania" by Gayathri et al (Gayathri, 2012)) and hence it is not my intention to repeat the same here in this paper. Instead, I will focus on the ship on the horizon, Patanjali Ayurved Limited.

One competition that Nestle would never really anticipate was from Patanjali Ayurved Limited (PAL) run by Yoga Guru

Baba Ramdev. Patanjali which is into a range of products best seller toothpaste to ghee and has a turnover crossing Rs 2000 crores! (Narayan, 2015). All these without any marketing ingredients like advertisement that one believes are key to success in Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) space in India. The direct challenge Nestle faces from Patanjali is the introduction of instant noodles.

Instant noodle from Patanjali will be made from whole wheat flour (atta), unlike noodles of other companies which are made up of maida (fine flour) and have only 10 per cent atta, as per Yoga Guru Ramdev. Patanjali noodles (70 gram pack) will be available at Rs 15, compared to competitor's price of Rs 25 and its taste-maker will be a health maker. Further, Patanjali noodles will use rice-bran oil and not cheap and inferior palm oil as used by others. This may lead to price war in the noodle market in India. Especially so, as the Patanjali Ayurved company is focussed on revenues and not so much on profit. Patanjali is set to double its bottom line to Rs 5000 crores this fiscal (Zarabi, 2015). Patanjali has teamed up with the Future Group and will sell its products through Big Bazars of the Future Group (Business Line Bureau, 2015). These may be the real challenge for Nestle. But even as on 15 November 2015, PAL web did not list instant noodle as one of its products (Patanjali Ayurved Limited, 2015). As and when instant noodle from PAL hits the market, it will give run for the money to Nestle.

The Fall

All hell was let loose at Nestle when the Uttar Pradesh FDA ordered recall of 2 lakh packs of Maggi on the 30 April 2015 (See **Figure 2**).

This was following a food inspector Mr. Sanjay Singh of Uttar Pradesh (UP) “Food Safety and Drug Administration Department” in Barabanki town, UP reporting that the amount of lead found in Maggi was 17.2 ppm as compared to 2.5 ppm maximum acceptable limit of lead as per FSSAI regulations (Bhushan, 2015).

Paul Bulcke, the global CEO was flown in to address the press conference on 5 June 2015, such was the wildfire effect of the recall! Battling the Maggi controversy, global giant Nestle recalled its then India chief Etienne Benet to Switzerland head office and appointed on 24 July 2015 Suresh Narayanan as his successor - the first Indian to get this position after a gap of over 16 years. Suresh Narayanan took over charge as Managing Director of Nestle India on 1 August 2015 (Bloomberg Business, 2015).

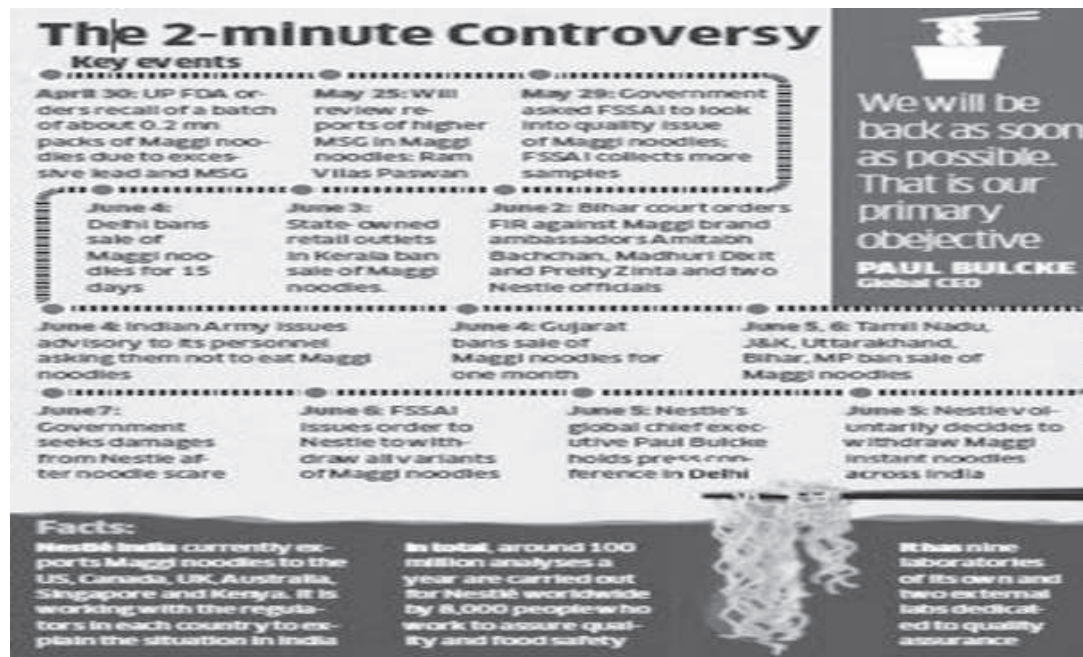


Figure 2: Time line of the controversy

The news went viral across India and within a month Maggi was banned across India. Maggi recalled more than 27,000 tonnes of noodles, worth Rs 320 Crore recalled from 3.5 million retail outlets, with 10,000 trucks transporting them for incineration in cement plants. They pay Rs 20 crore to Ambuja cements to help destroy the recalled units. (Mitra, 2015). In all, Nestle had destroyed 35,000 tonnes of Maggi as on 9 November 2015 (Nestle, 2015).

Apart from lead, monosodium glutamate (MSG) - commonly known as ajinomoto - was also found to be present in the tested samples with no appropriate label declaration. The Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulation, 2011 provides a list of food products that should not have flavour enhancers like MSG. A CSE lab research into various kinds of junk food – done in 2012 – had found that Maggi instant noodles came with a high salt content. A packet of noodle had around 3 gram of salt – the recommended salt intake per person per day is 6 gram. The lab study had also found that addition of vitamins, as claimed by Maggi, did not make it a healthy food as it had negligible fibres; 70 per cent of it was just carbohydrates (Centre for Science and Environment, 2015).

Losses to Nestle due to Maggi fiasco

Nestle suffered four kinds of losses: 1) Direct business loss 2) Brand value loss 3) Stock price loss. 4) And the cost it will incur in re-launching Maggi. Direct business loss has two components - the one-time cost of recall and the

continuing loss in sales. Nestle claimed FSSAI recalling Maggi cost it Rs 320 crore and monthly sales were around Rs 185 crore. Let's assume, as many analysts are, that Maggi will suffer four months of absence from shop shelves. That means a loss of Rs 740 crore in revenue. So, direct business loss for Nestlé is Rs 1,060 crore. Maggi suffered huge loss in brand value of around Rs 1270 Crore. Nestlé India's market cap loss from last week of May 2015 was about Rs 9300 Crore. Nestlé will have to spend around Rs 450 crore in marketing- more than double the marketing spend on Maggi before the controversy- to get the instant noodle product back on track. Summing up loss figures under the four heads gives the total loss at Rs 12,080 crore. (Chakarbarti, 2015).

In addition, department of consumer affairs (DCA), Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry, Government of India, filed a Class Suit with India's top consumer court National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) against Nestle claiming a damage of Rs 640 crores (The Hindu Business Line Bureau, 2015). The suit filed in public interest on 11 August alleges unfair trade practices, false labelling and misleading advertisements for Maggi instant noodles by the Nestle India. The NCDRC on 17 August 2015 issued notice to Nestle India Ltd. (Mittal, 2015). The ministry officials say that petition before NCDRC is completely different from what had transpired in the Bombay High Court.

The share price of Maggi fell to dismal Rs 5499 on 8 June 2015 from its peak of Rs 7499.95 on 10 March 2015 (Money

Control, 2015) following the reporting of lead and MSG in excess of safe limit in Maggi and subsequent recall of Maggi on 30 April 2015 (See **Figure 3**).



Figure 3: Movement of Share Prices of Maggi

The Role of the Judiciary

The Bombay High Court's verdict on 13 August 2015 lifting the food regulator's ban on Maggi has again highlighted the obvious: we need to standardise the current food testing procedure in the country.

Coming down hard on India's food regulator, the Bombay High Court said the Food and Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had acted in an "arbitrary" manner and did not follow the principles of natural justice when it banned the nine variants of Maggi noodles manufactured by food giant Nestle India. Simply put, the food regulator was in a haste to ban the product and didn't give Nestle a fair hearing before it ordered the withdrawal of Maggi from grocery stores.

The Bounce Back

With the news of clearance of Maggi by the Mumbai court and subsequent lifting of the ban by the various state governments such as Karnataka, the share price of Nestle India bounced back to Rs 7397.90 on 4 November 2015 from its low of Rs 5499 on 8 June 2015 (Money Control, 2015).

Your Maggi is Safe, has always been.

Nestle came out with half page advertisement on the front page of every prominent national newspapers on 19 October 2015 (See, for example, "The Hindu" dated 19 October 2015), reassuring its loyal customers that "Your MAGGI is SAFE, has always been". Honourable High Court of Bombay had ordered for testing of samples of

Maggi by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited labs in India and 100% samples of Maggi noodles passed the test. The lead content was less than 2.5 ppm in all the samples.

This is a public relation effort by the Nestle to get back to the market as soon as possible but there are many hurdles to be crossed.

Nestle India re-launched Maggi on 9 November 2015 hundred towns in India (Bharghava, 2015) beating its earlier deadline of 15 November 2015. Maarten Geraets, General Manager, foods, Nestle India, is the man of the moment for the Swiss multinational in ensuring a smooth re-launch of Maggi instant noodles. Geraets' team negotiated with state authorities, finalising the customer awareness programme and specified the regions where Maggi will be rolled out first (Datta, 2015).

The production of Maggi has restarted at Nanjangud (Karnataka), Moga (Punjab) and Bicholim (Goa) and manufacturing is yet to resume (as on 10 November 2015) at Tahliwal (Himachal Pradesh) and Pantnagar (Uttarakhand). Maggi continues to be banned (as on 10 November 2015) in eight states, namely, Bihar, Orissa, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Interestingly, factories at Tahliwal (Himachal Pradesh) and Pantnagar (Uttarakhand), which have begun production, are in states where the ban continues. At least some time, the production at these factories must be meant for

consumption in states where the ban is lifted. Karnataka government lifted the ban on Maggi on 19 October 2015 (Khajane, 2015) even before the test results on samples were made available (Kannada Prabha Correspondent, 2015).

Maggi will be rolled out across the country in a phased manner, for which the company is working with its suppliers and distributors and it will take some time to cover the four million stores where Maggi was available prior to the fiasco (Bhargava, 2015). Sixty thousand Maggi welcome kits comprising of 12 packs of Maggi, a 2016 Maggi calendar, a Maggi fridge magnet, Maggi postcard and “Welcome Back” letter were sold out within five minutes on Snapdeal, an internet platform for sale of goods. The registration for the welcome kit had started on 9 November 2015. Another batch of Maggi Welcome Kits will go sale from 16 November 2015 (Bhargava, 2015).

Discussion

There was a big outrage on the news of excessive lead content in Maggi with states after state banning Maggi. Such outrage over food products is uncommon in India, where public expectations of strict food safety norms are low. News about sickness and death caused by food poisoning from wedding feasts and school lunch programs is routine here. People nonchalantly flock roadside eateries located next to garbage dumps and serve food exposed to flies and cooked by men who don't wear gloves. India lacks a strong consumer protection law and a mechanism for food recall.

So why is there so much anger over lead and monosodium glutamate in India's favorite middle-class snack? Why did Nestle get into this muddle?

Why did Nestle get into the Muddle?

The reason as to why Maggi got into a muddle can be seen on the following accounts:

1. The Maggi quality check story is a clear indicator of the power of social media (Knowledge@Wharton, 2015).
2. Some analysts say it could be because the brand came to symbolize middle-class defiance against hours of laborious Indian cooking traditions, as well as a modern woman's freedom.
3. Competition trying to get Nestle into a fix
4. Nestle "wronging" the system which is riddled with corruption

The Public relation handling of the issue was ham-handed, to say the least. Later, when the problem snow balled into major crisis, the CEO and the Chairman had to be changed. Suresh Narayan had to replace the then Managing Director, Etienne Benet (Agarwal, 2015).

Maggi's downfall was fated and the lab reports were only the trigger. When people have started questioning the myths of modernity - speed, efficiency and growth - the icons of modernity would naturally take a beating. The discourse of the poisoned food popularised by the global environment

movement is fuelled by the discontents of modernity. Indians too will soon start moving from fast food to healthy choices. Maggi was a part of the rite of passage for a nation that started embracing global modernity two decades ago (Kumar, 2015).

Corruption in the Government Machinery and Testing Labs

The whole fiasco could be the result of Nestle “wronging” the system. Some feel that even if one has the best product quality, one will be a naïve to expect one’s product samples to clear the laboratory tests unless properly stuffed envelopes are given to the right hands. The whole system is very well-oiled machinery that food industry insiders know and stick to. One theory that some food tester developed conscience may well be true, but it seems more likely that the growth of this honest conscience was aided by dollops of cash handed by a competitor. For example, if the going rate for clearing a sample is, say, Rs. 10,000- a competitor may go to the scientist at the laboratory and offer, say, Rs. 100,000- for failing the sample. After all the scientist has only to shift a decimal a bit to the right – lead content has to go up from 1.70 ppm to 17.0 ppm. Everyone needs money and a lakh of rupees to just shift a decimal is a temptation too strong to resist (Chawla, 2015).

The above theory is a conjecture. There is no way of knowing what exactly happened.

Celebrities Drawn into the Muddle

One of the fallout of this fiasco is that celebrities such as Amitabh Bachchan were drawn into controversy as they had endorsed the product, often as “healthy”. In his affidavit filed before the Tamil Nadu States Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, the actor said that he had agreed to promote the product only from June 5, 2012 to September 5, 2013 when there was no complaint about Maggi’s quality (Press Trust of India (PTI), 2015).

This highlights the issue of the extent of responsibility that the brand ambassadors have to take with respect to the quality of the products being endorsed. If the courts were to hold the ambassadors responsible, then there will certainly be costs attached to it.

Concluding Remarks

The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission has sent on 15 October 2015 thirteen Maggi samples to Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) at Mysuru for determining if they contained any lead or monosodium glutamate. The court has asked the laboratory to complete the test within four weeks “if possible” (Press Trust of India (PTI), 2015). Since the same CFTRI had cleared on 5 August 2015 the Maggi samples sent to it for testing earlier (Correspondent, 2015), Nestle may expect a favourable report. It is also possible that the results are not favourable (batches for the samples being different). So, theoretically, the problems for Maggi are not yet completely over.

Maggi was reintroduced in 100 towns on 9 November 2015 and will be rolled out across the country in a phased manner, for which the company is working with its suppliers and distributors and it will take some time to cover the four million stores where Maggi was available prior to the fiasco (Bharghava, 2015).

From strategic perspective, Nestle was too dependent on Maggi and an order by the Indian food safety regulator in June 2015 to recall the popular snack resulted in the company's first ever quarterly loss in more than 15 years. After bringing Maggi back, the company will have to look to expand its offerings in chocolates and beverages including coffee and milk products. At the first stage, the focus will be on adding more variants, followed by introductions of some of Nestle's global portfolio of food products (Narayanan, 2015).

The question of whether fast food should be banned is not really valid. With the changing value systems and pressure on time, fast foods are here to stay. But the fast food manufacturers have to exercise greater care in ensuring consumer safety, even if the problems are just mental.

The case has many strategic and ethical implications in that a greater care has to be exercised in vendor management (for the lead to come in from the inputs used) and ethical handling of the situations, should situations go out of hand.

Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom and those who do not use the power responsibly will lose it – this is termed the “Iron Law of responsibility”. Let us give Nestle and the

other corporates a long rope and hope the days of fairness to the consumers and plenty for the company are not too far.

End Notes

- 1. FSSAI and FDA:** FSSAI is an acronym for “Food Safety Standards Authority of India” and FDA is an acronym for “Food and Drug Administration”. FDA is setup by the state Governments (for example, Maharashtra FDI), whereas FSSAI is an authority under the Ministry of Health & Welfare, Government of India. FSSAI governs all food business operators in the country & entrusted the powers at various levels to other designated authorities like the FDA to speed the process of granting registration or licenses. Thus, it may be seen that FDA in India is a designate body of FSSAI. FSSAI is responsible for protecting and promoting public health through the regulation and supervision of food safety. The Food Safety Standards Act was passed on 23rd August, 2006, by the parliament. The FSSAI has been established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which is a consolidating statute related to food safety and regulation in India. FSSAI has been created for laying down science-based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food for human consumption. (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, 2011). (Food Safety and Standards Association of India (FSSAI), 2015). The Government of India on

notification set a body known as the Food Safety Standards Authority of India that formulated the Food Safety Standards Regulations (FSSR), 2011 that came in to effect from the 5th of August, 2011. With the law coming into effect last year, it becomes absolutely mandatory for every food business operator to register themselves under FSSAI and acquire a license (Equinox Labs, 2015).

- 2. MSG: Monosodium Glutamate (MSG)**, commonly known as ajinomoto, is a taste enhancer that is found naturally in many foods such as tomatoes, Parmesan cheese, potatoes, mushrooms, and other vegetables and fruits. Codex Alimentarius (The Codex Alimentarius is a collection of internationally recognized standards, codes of practice, guidelines and other recommendations relating to foods, food production and food safety) categorised MSG as a flavour enhancer. The human body uses glutamic acid as a fine-tuner of brain function and contributes to the characteristic “umami – the fifth taste” of foods; (If you are curious to know, the four tastes are, sweet, salty, sour, or bitter!). A review of the scientific data from the world’s top scientific sources reveals that MSG is safe for human consumption. Under the Indian food laws, MSG is a permitted additive in foods (Khosla, 2015). Then why this uproar about excessive MSG? It is basically because of lack of awareness – Ajinomoto in moderation is not harmful to the body.

3. The maximum permissible lead content of 2.5 parts per million (ppm) is specified in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India), Notification dated, dated the 1st August, 2011, New Delhi.

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