



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Marketing

EVALUATING CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND PREFERENCES TOWARDS STREET FOOD IN COIMBATORE CITY

KEY WORDS:

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates consumer satisfaction and attitudes towards street food in Coimbatore City, specifically taste, affordability, hygiene, and accessibility. Street food is an integral part of the daily lives of most residents, providing affordable and convenient meal solutions in the midst of their busy lifestyles. Nevertheless, problems like irregular hygiene practices and quality standards pose serious issues. Based on primary data gathered through structured questionnaires and supplemented with secondary data, the study uses simple percentage analysis and weighted average analysis to analyse consumer perceptions. The results indicate that price or affordability is the most significant determinant of street food consumption, with consumers' concern for hygiene still being a very important issue. The research highlights the importance of enhanced food safety measures, vendor training, and regulatory enforcement to improve consumer satisfaction and promote the sustainability of the street food industry in Coimbatore.

INTRODUCTION

Street food refers to a ready-to-consume food and beverages made by hawkers/street vendors and sold in public places, streets, markets, or from a roadside stall/street stand. Street food speaks variety, convenience, and affordability. It is deeply imbued in the cultural fabric of a great many countries, not merely a source of nutrition in India but also representative of this great nation's variety in foods. Street food is characterized by accessibility.

One of the major reasons people in India prefer street food is the busy work life that most people lead these days. With long working hours and the hustle of urban commuting, preparing elaborate meals at home often becomes impractical. Street foods are actually convenient options to consume freshly prepared meals rather than spending valuable time cooking something at home. To the students, office-goers, and labourers, these stalls act like a source of survival since they obtain economical and healthy meals out of these during their busy daily routines. Another critical factor that forces street food to become very popular is its affordability. Owing to the increasing costs of eating out in restaurants, street food has turned out to be an inexpensive alternative which does not compromise on taste or quality. The dishes are delicious and at prices that would suit any class-from a daily wage earner to a corporate employee.

This level of availability ensures that no matter how unpredictable someone's schedule is, they have access to a satisfying meal. Other factors contributing to its popularity are the aspects of accessibility. The informal character of the street food sector fosters small-scale entrepreneurs by offering them livelihoods and hence contributes to the general economic ecology. Additionally, street food is representative of the cultural and regional variability of India. Street food is much more than a meal for the citizens of India; rather, it forms part of their lives. Its affordability and availability make it an appropriate fit for the busy work life of Indians. While the economy of India is growing, street food goes on, acting as the cultural bridge between the majority and the minority. This enduring popularity reflects not only the practicality but also the vibrant and dynamic spirit of India's culinary traditions.

Statement OfThe Problem

Street food, though part of Coimbatore's food culture, poses some problems that have continued to plague consumers and vendors. Hygiene is one of the main issues since most of them operate without proper facilities and/or follow food safety standards.

Hygiene And Safety: Hygiene and safety in the street food business are fundamental. Most of the time, food vendors face difficulties related to the availability of clean water, poor waste management, and unhygienic food preparation and presentation.

Quality And Standardization: The maintenance of quality regarding the taste, quantity of portions, and quality of ingredients is another challenging issue faced by the street food vendor. This inconsistency in food products may result in consumers being dissatisfied with the particular products.

Consumer Preference: Since Coimbatore city is made of different demographics, with different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and economic strata, its consumer taste varies from a taste for local cuisine to a taste for innovation and convenience.

Knowledge Gap: Minimum studies related to street foods in Coimbatore restrict systematic solutions to these problems. Hence, avenues for betterment are limited.

Objectives OfThe Study

- To analyse and understand the factors influencing respondents' preference for street food over restaurant food in Coimbatore City.
- To study the perception about hygiene and food safety issues by the consumers and its relation to consumer choices.
- To identify and evaluate the key factors that contribute to consumer satisfaction and preference for street food in Coimbatore City.

Limitations OfThe Study

- Geographic Limitation:** This would be confined to Coimbatore and may not reveal consumer behaviour in other areas.
- Sample size-resource constraint issues may lead to limited sample sizes, which could make findings non-generalizable.
- Self-reported Data:** The use of questionnaires for data may induce response biases.

Research Methodology

Research methodology will be a vital means of assessment in consumer satisfaction and preference since it ensures that the collection and analysis of data are systematically done.

Primary Data: Collected directly from respondents themselves, consumers, through the use of structured tools,

namely questionnaires

Secondary Data: Collected from literature reviews, reports from government and health authorities on street food consumption, and food safety and related regulations.

Tools Used For Analysis

For analysis the following tools have been used

- Simple Percentage Analysis
- Weighted Average Analysis

Review Of The Literature

According to **Abhinaya and Suresh (2021)**, who studied food truck trends among consumers in Coimbatore, the food trucks having some of those innovative menu items, convenience of access, and attractive places made great appeal among the younger generation of Coimbatore. These were found as prime forces towards the increasing acceptability of food trucks among city purchasers.

Similarly, **Priya and Balaji (2021)** had laid down popular newly fused street foods from Coimbatore, stating the examples such as "paneer dosa" and "chocolate paratha" which kindled a blaze in the hearts and minds of the youth. The findings revealed that those introduced new foods did extra sales, but patrons showed a willingness to pay reasonably for them. The holistic satisfaction, however, depended well on the exact combination of novel features, taste, and price.

Analysis And Interpretation Simple Percentage Analysis:

This analysis is done to identify the preference of respondents for street food and their opinion on hygiene standards met by street food vendors

Table 1.1 Preference Of The Respondents For Street Food Over Restaurant Food

Preference	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, significantly	23	18.9%
Yes, somewhat	69	56.6%
No	21	17.2%
Not sure	9	7.4%
TOTAL	122	100%

Interpretation

The above table shows preference of the respondents for street food over restaurant food based on "taste of food". The table clearly indicates that 56.6% (69) of the total respondents have a moderate preference for street food over restaurant food. Additionally, 18.9% (23) strongly prefer street food, while 17.2% (21) do not prefer it. Meanwhile, 7.4% (9) remain uncertain about their preference.

Table 1.2 Hygiene Standards In Street Food

Hygiene Standards	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, significantly	22	18%
Yes, somewhat	66	54.1%
No	22	18%
Not sure	12	9.8%
TOTAL	122	100%

Interpretation

Among the respondents, 54.1% (66) believe that street food meets hygiene standards to some extent, while 18% (22) strongly agree with its hygiene levels. Conversely, 18% (22) do not perceive street food as hygienic, and 9.8% (12) remain uncertain.

Weighted Average Analysis:

This analysis is done to identify the key factors contributing to consumer satisfaction and preference for street food.

Table 2.1 Weighted Average Of Factors Contributing To Consumer Satisfaction And Preference For Street Food

Factors	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Total	Rank score
Customer service	32	35	19	22	14	122	$(32 \times 1 + 35 \times 2 + 19 \times 3 + 21 \times 4 + 14 \times 5) = 317$
Cleanliness	8	44	26	11	33	122	$(8 \times 1 + 44 \times 2 + 26 \times 3 + 11 \times 4 + 33 \times 5) = 383$
Affordability	8	35	34	16	29	122	$(8 \times 1 + 35 \times 2 + 34 \times 3 + 16 \times 4 + 29 \times 5) = 389$
Location	10	52	27	20	13	122	$(10 \times 1 + 52 \times 2 + 27 \times 3 + 20 \times 4 + 13 \times 5) = 340$

Ranking Based On Scores:

Affordability (389) – Most important factor

Cleanliness (383)

Location (340)

Customer Service (317) – Least important factor

This shows that affordability is the most significant factor influencing consumer satisfaction and preference for street food in Coimbatore, while customer service is the least prioritized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study reveals some insights into the consumer behaviour and preference of street food Coimbatore city. Among others, 56.6% of the people stated moderate preference for street food concerning restaurant food, which shows that street food is fairly acceptable among the public. On another note, 54.1% of the respondents have stated that street food vendors implement hygiene standards to some extent, which would need the attention of food safety practices.

Among various factors affecting customer satisfaction and preference, the weighted average analysis of all the factors indicates that affordability was the most prevailing one, followed by cleanliness, convenience of location, and customer service. The above findings, therefore, show that it could be possible to keep the street food business interesting and acceptable to consumers as long as cleanliness and convenience will not be compromised while being kept in a reasonable price range.

Hygienic practices and safety measures should be strictly followed by street food vendors to build consumer confidence and satisfaction; also, training programs on food handling, cleanliness, and hygiene practices should be imparted to them. Regular inspections and checks by local authorities must also be done to ascertain compliance with the food safety codes. Awareness about hygiene practices should be created among both vendors and consumers through targeted campaigns and workshops. In addition, the price strategies must be retained so as to continue to attract price-sensitive clients without compromising on quality.

The study finds street food to enjoy quite an important place in the daily lives of residents in Coimbatore, particularly working people and youths, on the affordability, accessibility, variety it offers. Though moderate preference over that of restaurant food is found among respondents, it must be admitted that concerns on hygiene and safety about food remain. Affordability was the most contributing factor toward consumer satisfaction, followed closely by cleanliness and location. Street food in urban settings is then destined to thrive, even in sub-optimal conditions because it is culturally rich and economically important to city life. However, on instituting proper hygiene norms, infrastructural support, and vendor training, this street food industry in Coimbatore can

then be made safer, more reliable, and even more attractive to the public.

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