

Analysing Consumer Behaviour in Relation to Consuming Street Food amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract: *Street food refers to foods and beverages that are prepared and vended in public places, such as streets and festivals, for immediate consumption. These food items are typically ready-to-eat and can either be prepared on-site by the vendor or pre-prepared. Street food can be consumed at the point of purchase or taken away to be eaten elsewhere. Some individuals rely on street food as their daily meal. However, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about significant changes in the world, including people's eating habits. Hygiene has now taken precedence in the minds of consumers, leading to substantial shifts in the restaurant industry for both consumers and sellers.*

In the post-COVID-19 era, concerns have arisen regarding the safety of consuming street food. People are now prioritizing hygiene above all other factors, such as taste and price. This descriptive research study aims to investigate the changing behaviour of consumers following the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary objective of this research is to understand the impact of the pandemic on street food vendors and consumers and to identify those who are embracing changes to restore a sense of normalcy.

Keywords: Street food, Covid -19, consumer, street food vendor, hygiene practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

Street food consists of ready-to-eat food items and beverages that are vended by a seller or merchant in a public location, such as a street or a public market. It is often served from mobile food stalls, food carts, or food trucks, with the intention of immediate consumption. While some street food offerings are specific to certain regions, many have gained popularity beyond their places of origin. Most street foods are considered both finger foods and fast-food options, typically more affordable than restaurant meals. The varieties of street food differ from one region and culture to another in countries around the world.



In contemporary times, individuals opt for street food for various purposes, including convenience, the opportunity to savour flavourful fare at an affordable cost in a social atmosphere, quick service, the exploration of diverse ethnic cuisines, and the nostalgia it evokes. Growing apprehensions associated with street food encompass health and

sanitation risks, unauthorized occupation of public or private spaces, concerns related to social and ethical matters, and the potential for traffic congestion. The practice of street food vending is a global phenomenon, yet it exhibits substantial variations across different regions and cultures.

India is bursting with an abundance of delectable street food, making it a bit overwhelming to decide where to embark on your culinary adventure. In this article, you'll discover a helpful guide to India's top street food cities, the most sought-after street food delights, and valuable tips on enjoying street food safely. The love for street food has always been ingrained in Indian culture, and no matter which city you visit in the country, you'll encounter vendors peddling regional favourites. These streets are brimming with a diverse array of meals, sweets, and refreshing beverages like chai and fresh fruit juices.

Indian street food is often characterized by its spiciness, occasional indulgence in oil, and, without fail, its deliciousness. It's also a unifying force, attracting people from all walks of life and socioeconomic backgrounds to popular street food stalls. The history of Indian street food is rich and varied. In Delhi's lanes, you can visit kebab vendors who once catered to the Mughal emperors. In Kolkata, you'll encounter fusion street food creations that were originally designed with British customers in mind during the colonial era.

Indian street food is often regarded as the hidden gem of Indian cuisine. Not only are the bite-sized portions just right, but they also burst with flavours down to the tiniest nibble.

What makes Indian street food truly exceptional is the sheer variety it offers. For carnivores, there's an abundance of dishes featuring spiced meats, while vegetarians and vegans can explore numerous options that cater to their preferences.

Food not only satiates our hunger but also brings joy to our souls. As the saying goes, if we can feed ourselves daily, most of life's problems are resolved. Like any other nation, Indians around the world have gained a reputation for being enthusiastic food enthusiasts, and each region boasts a cuisine that's unique to its local produce, geographical features, traditions, and people. As the famous American chef Paul Prudhomme once said, "You don't need a silver fork to eat good food." Sometimes, the simplest culinary skills using the humblest of ingredients can yield the most delicious results. And it's always an added bonus if the meal in front of us is diverse and affordable. There's nothing quite as appetizing and budget-friendly as street food, and Indian street food, in particular, offers a distinctive fusion of flavours that harmonize subtly with one another.

Mumbai is a cosmopolitan city known for its numerous lip-smacking dishes. Be it veggie lover or non-vegetarian, the dishes in Mumbai brag of rich taste, hotness and amazing flavours. The city is renowned for its delectable chaats available at various food stalls lining the bustling streets of Mumbai. These stalls are always teeming with people who savour the tangy street food and local snacks. In addition to the traditional offerings like chaats, desserts, and seafood specialties, Mumbai boasts elegant continental restaurants throughout the city, catering to a more refined palate for those who may not be accustomed to the spiciness of the local cuisine.

The consumption of street food underwent significant changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the emergence of the pandemic, people became more cautious about their food choices, hygiene, and safety. Several key factors and trends in street food consumption during this time included:

Hygiene and Safety Concerns: The primary shift in street food consumption during COVID-19 was an increased emphasis on hygiene and safety. Consumers were more vigilant about the cleanliness of food stalls, the use of personal protective equipment by vendors, and the overall sanitary conditions in which street food was prepared and served.

Social Distancing: Social distancing measures impacted the way people consumed street food. Crowded food stalls or markets were less attractive, and consumers preferred places where they could maintain distance from others.

Takeout and Delivery: Many street food vendors adapted to the situation by offering takeout and delivery options. Consumers embraced these alternatives to enjoy their favorite street foods without dining in crowded areas.

Contactless Payment: Contactless payment methods became more popular as people sought to reduce physical contact with cash and cards when purchasing street food.

Vigilance in Food Handling: Vendors had to demonstrate greater transparency in food handling practices, such as wearing masks and gloves, sanitizing surfaces, and providing hand sanitizers to customers.

Menu Changes: Some street food vendors adjusted their menus or introduced new items to cater to changing consumer preferences. This could include healthier options or dishes that were easier to consume while maintaining safety measures.

Support for Local Vendors: There was a growing appreciation for local street food vendors as people recognized the economic impact of the pandemic on small businesses. Consumers often made an effort to support their favourite street food vendors.

Government Regulations: Many governments implemented guidelines and regulations to ensure the safety of street food consumption during the pandemic. Compliance with these regulations was a key factor in consumers' decision-making.

Overall, the consumption of street food during COVID-19 became a more cautious and mindful process, with an increased focus on hygiene and safety. Vendors and consumers adapted to the new norms, and street food remained an integral part of many people's culinary experiences, even in the face of a global health crisis.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Catherine Brinkle 2021) Due to increasing income inequality, rising unemployment rates, and indoor dining restrictions resulting from COVID-19, more individuals are turning to street vending as a means to make a living and meet a growing demand. When you think of street food, perhaps the image that comes to mind is the popular food trucks that are increasingly appearing on streets and in parking lots throughout the United States.

(Dr. Ritu Budania 2020) Ever since the COVID-19 outbreak evolved into a pandemic, affecting a substantial number of individuals in India, we have become highly cautious about our way of life. People are diligently following all precautions to protect their families and themselves from the grasp of COVID-19. Experts have indicated that there is no conclusive evidence suggesting that food can transmit the coronavirus. However, this doesn't definitively prove that food and packages containing food are entirely safe.

(Nayab Fatima 2020) All food industry associations must rigorously adhere to the Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) protocols established by experts, which are based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) principles. These protocols should be regularly updated in response to new evidence regarding viruses as needed. In food establishments where HACCP protocols are not being implemented, it is advisable to appoint a specialist who can maintain communication with public health authorities to seek guidance during pandemic situations.

To ensure the safety of the workforce, it is essential to maintain hand-washing stations equipped with regular soap, warm running water, hand sanitizers, and informative signage detailing effective hand washing and sanitation practices. Physical distancing of at least 6 feet should be enforced among workers, as infected individuals may remain asymptomatic or be pre-symptomatic during the illness and can potentially transmit the disease when in close proximity to others.

(Serpil Aday 2020) A pandemic is not a novel occurrence in the history of humanity, as various pandemics have been experienced throughout time. What characterizes pandemics is their significant adverse impact on the global economy. When considering the food supply chain, one of the most crucial sectors of the economy, it becomes evident that COVID-19 has had a profound effect on the entire process, from the field to the consumer. In light of the recent challenges within the food supply chain, there is now considerable concern about food production, processing, distribution, and demand. COVID-19 has resulted in constraints on labour, shifts in consumer demand, the closure of food production facilities, restricted food trade policies, and economic pressures on the food supply chain. Consequently, governments should facilitate the movement of workers and support agri-food providers to address these issues.

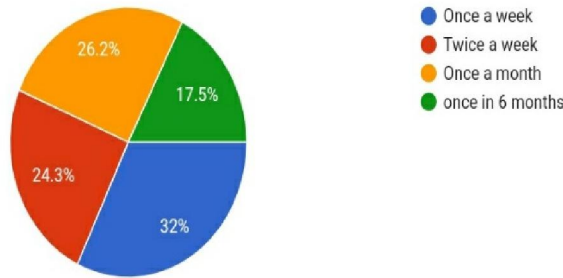
2.1 Objectives

- To highlight food sold on street during COVID-19, in Malad
- Understanding hygiene followed by street food vendors during COVID-19, in Malad
- To identify types of consumer patronizing street food during COVID-19 in Malad

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

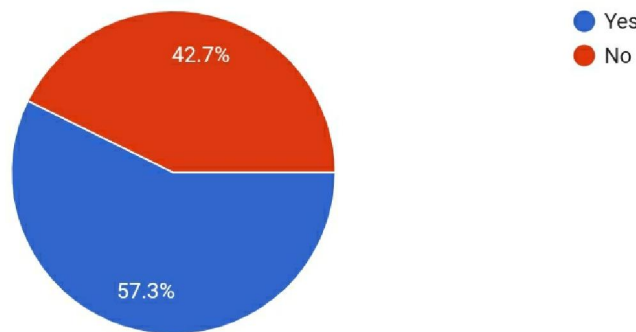
How often do you eat street food during COVID-19?

So as per the survey we can conclude that people actually hesitate to eat street food during COVID-19. So, the first alternative hypothesis is proven to be true. People think it is difficult to rule out the possibility of the infection being spread through food by an infected person who may have not washed hands thoroughly or might not be following hygiene guidelines.



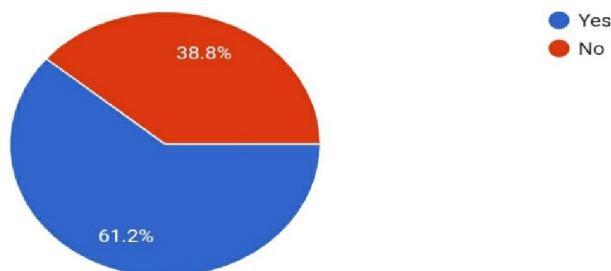
Are the street food vendors maintaining hygiene practices during COVID-19?

Government has given guidelines to the street food vendors to carry out their business, during this pandemic situation. It is mandatory on the part of these vendors to follow the guidelines to protect themselves from closures and safeguard their customers health too. Due to COVID-19 hygiene has become the topmost priority for the consumer and vendors are trying their level best to maintain maximum hygiene. They are taking a lot of care to process and serve their food in proper hygienic manner.



Is work space hygiene maintain by street food vendors?

As we can see that respondents thinks that street food vendors are maintaining their work space hygiene and it is important to keep the work space hygienic because if they will keep their work space clean and hygienic, they will attract more customers because just by seeing cleanliness on work space it feels good to eat.



IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the survey, it can be inferred that individuals exhibit reluctance to consume street food during the COVID-19 pandemic. This supports the validation of the first alternative hypothesis. People's concerns stem from the difficulty in ruling out the potential transmission of the infection through food, particularly when prepared or handled by an infected person who may not have adhered to proper handwashing practices or hygiene guidelines.

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