

Exploring Consumer Perception and Awareness of Street Food: A Case Study in Guwahati City

Udit Khakhlary¹, Richika Kedia²

Student of Master of Commerce, The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati, India.

Email: [uditkhakhlary\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:uditkhakhlary[at]gmail.com)

Ph no: +919957037667

Assistant Professor in Royal School of Commerce at The Assam Royal Global University & Research Scholar of Department of Commerce, Gauhati University, Assam

Email: [kedarichika\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:kedarichika[at]gmail.com)

Ph no: +91 7002355911

Abstract: *Street foods are the foods that are very much popular in different parts of the world due to their uniqueness, difference in flavors and affordability. People prefer eating street food due to low cost and easy accessibility. The aim of the present study is to determine consumer's perception towards street food and also to analyse consumer's awareness about food safety and hygiene in the main streets of Guwahati city. A survey was conducted on 100 consumers in the main streets of Guwahati city. The findings in the study showed that consumers prefer to eat street food due to their unique taste and flavour. The study also found out that majority of the consumers are aware about food safety and hygiene and almost 83% of the consumers have knowledge about food borne disease that occurs from unhygienic food. Governments should try to promote educational campaigns and advertisements about food safety and hygiene in different parts of the country so that consumers can acquire knowledge about food borne diseases.*

Keywords: Street Food, Consumers Perception, Guwahati city, Consumers Awareness, Food Safety and hygiene

1. Introduction

Street foods are the foods or drinks that are sold by the vendors on a streets, markets, fairs and various other popular places. Street food is very much popular in different parts of the world due to its affordability and low cost and can be found in different varieties of items. Street food is mainly popular in south and southeast Asian countries like India, China, Singapore, Vietnam and Taiwan. Different countries provide different varieties of items that are unique in taste according to their cultures and region. Now a days due to the increase in information technology, street food is gaining too much popularity among the consumers around the world and people are gaining more and more knowledge about different varieties of items across the world. One of the main reasons for the popularity of street food across the world is tourism. Tourism has increased the popularity of street food by creating street food contents in the internet. Many tourists try to eat street food from different parts of the world and explores the uniqueness of different foods and traditional cuisines from different countries. By doing this they create a blog about different street foods and gain popularity in social media. These helps the consumers to gain knowledge about different foods and traditions across the world. Street food has become very much popular due to its affordability and easy accessibility among different age groups of people those staying outside from home for a long time due to their works. Some people eat street food because of their unique taste and different flavors and moreover the taste of people is rapidly changing from home made food to modern spicy food prepared by the street vendors. Now a days, governments are more concerned about street food due to the risk that occurs from unhygienic foods. Due to the increase in popularity, street food became one of the major concerns for public health. Consumers tries to eat

street food without realizing their consequences and due to this people suffers from food borne diseases that occurs from unhygienic foods.

2. Review of Literature

Sujatha, L. et. al. (2016) highlighted about the challenges faced by street vendors, social protection, measures taken by the government to prevent the harassment of street vendors by authorities and police, improving level of profitability and working conditions. The study revealed that street vendors face various problems due to fluctuation in the market prices, insecure employment, low income, no support from the NGOs, labor union, governments and also, they are facing problem due to payment of 15 to 20 percent of their income as bribes to the local police. The study suggested that government should provide safety to the vendors at work place.

Dalal, J. S. (2016) was based on information obtained from 300 households of Rohtak, Sonipat and Panipat cities of Haryana. The work in this paper focuses on consumer opinion towards street food and generating employment for people from poor economic condition in Haryana. The study also focuses on improving sales of street food. Based on the findings the study revealed that people from poor economic section have business opportunities to start street food business with little knowledge and experience. It has also been found that 100 percent of people are aware of street food and almost 33 percent of people eats street food monthly followed by, 17 percent occasionally. Some families avoid street food as they feel unhealthy and not hygienic. The study suggested that street vendors should wear uniforms which will be helpful in creating positive impact to consumers. The study also suggested that food handlers should participate on skill development conducted

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by NASVI, so that they can acquire knowledge about the business.

Borah S. et. al. (2020) highlighted the existing management practices of fast - food street vendors in Jorhat, Assam. The study is focused on different management practices of street food vendors relating to financial, family, social administration and maintenance of hygiene. Information is obtained from 111 street vendors. The paper revealed that government and local administration are to take some measures to provide training program, facilities in appropriate place and to make mandatory use of hygiene kit containing head cover, apron and gloves. The study also revealed that 34 percent of the vendors main source of money were from own savings and banks. Majority of the vendors provide products at a cheap rate to compete with other vendors and 72 percent of the vendors were providing sanitation facilities as well as water dispenser.

Wara, A. P. et. al. (2021) highlighted the socio - economic status, attitude and food safety knowledge of street food consumers. The work of the study also focuses on women food vendors. The study was done by obtaining information from 65 consumers and was observed that 27% consumers eat street food daily, 56.9% takes for easily availability, 35.4% choose women vendors for neat and clean stall. It was also observed that consumers want training program arrangements for women food vendors, social security to encourage women empowerment and also government support to increase women food vendors. It has also been found that many of the consumers have no knowledge of food safety and hygiene and also of food borne diseases which occur due to poor maintenance of food.

Parmar, C. et. al. (2022) highlighted the socio - economic factors, finance, working conditions and the effect of pandemic in life of street vendors. The information was collected from 50 respondents in Vadodara city. The findings in this study are that vendors are facing various problems of insecure work life, large workload, no guarantee of safety and security, limited earnings, etc. It has been further found that street vendors need to join trade union association, membership in national and international organizations to escape harassment from municipal authorities and police. The study also shows that about 56% of respondent's family members are affected by covid where as 44% are not affected and majority of the vendors financial conditions are affected due to the pandemic.

3. Problem Statement

In the present era, street food is very much popular and people buy foods from the street so as to meet their nutritional needs outside their home. Food vending is very much known for its uniqueness and taste, but those foods are also considered as unhealthy with poor hygiene and inappropriate sanitation that can cause contamination of food products. Safety of street foods is very much important in providing a balanced nutrition for people's health. Due to unhygienic foods, people face various problems of sickness and food borne diseases that can cause great harms to people. Millions of people eat street food without thinking about their health condition and gets

connected with the diseases originating from food and thousands of deaths occurs in the world. There is a need of spreading awareness regarding food safety and hygiene practices so as to ensure that people don't suffer from any diseases occurred from unhealthy food. Government and other authorities should take immediate action to promote and create awareness about the food safety educational programs to the peoples as well as the vendors for reducing the food borne diseases and promote public health.

Objectives of study

- 1) To study consumers' perception towards street food.
- 2) To study consumers' awareness about food safety and hygiene.

Research Methodology

In view of the objective of the study, the methodology used in this research is elaborated below:

- **Type of Research:** The study is Descriptive and qualitative in nature.
- **Universe of the study:** All the consumers in Guwahati city will be considered adequate to represent the characteristics.
- **Area of study:** The study is conducted in the select areas of Guwahati city.
- **Nature of Data:** The data for the research has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The data has been collected through questionnaires and schedules and also by reviewing various research papers.
- **Sampling Techniques:** This research study is conducted by using random sampling method and convenience sampling.
- **Sample size:** The research is conducted by collecting data from 100 consumers from the main streets of Guwahati city.
- **Tools of Data collection:** Questionnaires were collected from the Consumers.
- **Analysis of data:** In order to analyze the collected data, simple percentage, graphical representations and charts were used. It states the frequency and percentage of the respondent's profile, attitude and opinion regarding different variables. The analysis of data collected is presented with the help of different tables and figures.

Significance of the study

The study is attempted to explore the consumers perception towards street food and also the awareness about food safety and hygiene in the main streets of Guwahati city. This study will help the consumers in acquiring knowledge about food safety and hygiene and also help them in understanding about food borne diseases that occurs from unhygienic food. The study will also be useful for those that are interested in conducting research on street food vending. This study will also help to identify various advantages and disadvantages of street food for the consumers and help them remain healthy and hygienic.

Limitation of the study

- Due to the lack of time, access to data has become limited and it was very difficult to complete the project within the speculated time.

- People are not very honest about their responses in some of the situations and are hesitating to give their response honestly at the time of the interview.
- Even though the study is done on the basis of information collected from the respondents, it was very difficult to gather much information because people are not very responsive.
- The study has covered only the main streets of Guwahati city.

Popularity of street foods in Guwahati city

Street food is an informal sector that is not only known for its uniqueness but also for providing nutritious food for the people that are working the whole day outside their home. Guwahati is the city of Assam, India that is popularly known for its different tribes and cultures. Street food is very much popular in Guwahati due to its different cuisines from different cultures and traditions. Street foods in Guwahati has a unique flavour and taste from spicy and savoury dishes to delicious desserts and local traditional items. Street food has various combination of dishes all over the street food stalls in Guwahati city and is great for both vegetarians and meat lovers. With the increase in popularity of street food in Guwahati, many vendors are facing problems with tough competition for survival and are trying to focus in developing new items that will be helpful in attracting customers. By doing this, many food stalls are providing the best instant service and tasty food to the customers. Due to increase in popularity of street food in Guwahati city, people are now a days starting to change their eating habits from home - made food to spicy and flavoury street foods. These changes in habits of eating outside their home is bringing a major problem for the people in their diet. People are suffering from various food borne diseases that occurs from unhygienic food. These diseases occur because the food is prepared in an environment that is expose to various potential contaminants. These problems are to be well maintained by the street food vendors so that a balanced nutritional diet can be well maintained.

Street vending plays an important role in providing job opportunities for many people in Guwahati city, yet this sector is not recognized as legal by the local authorities or urban planning agencies. Even though in 2014, government has enacted an act (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending Act, 2014) to protect the rights and interest of the street vendors. Yet it is very difficult for the street food vendors to run their business daily because the local authorities are taking advantages of these situation to harass the vendors for setting up stalls on the streets. Street food is known not only for its unique flavour and taste but also for creating job opportunities for many uneducated people that are living in a poor economic condition. Many times, street food vendors face various problems in their business due to market instability but still they try to support their families and educate their children without any worries. Governments should try to provide various kinds of skill development programmes so that vendors can acquire knowledge about developing their business and also acquire knowledge about food safety and hygiene that will help their business grow.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

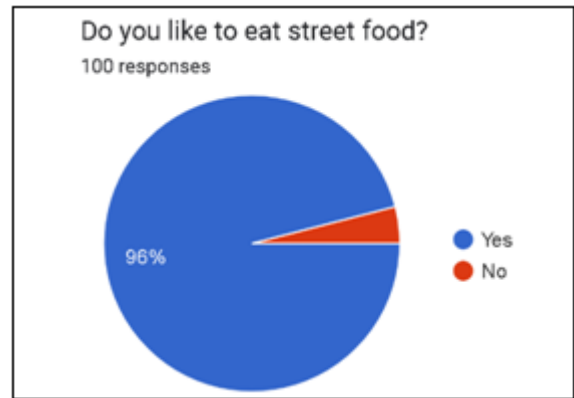


Figure 1: Figure showing whether the respondents like to eat street food or not
(Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it has been seen that 96% of the respondents like to eat street food and only 4% of the respondents does not like to eat street food.

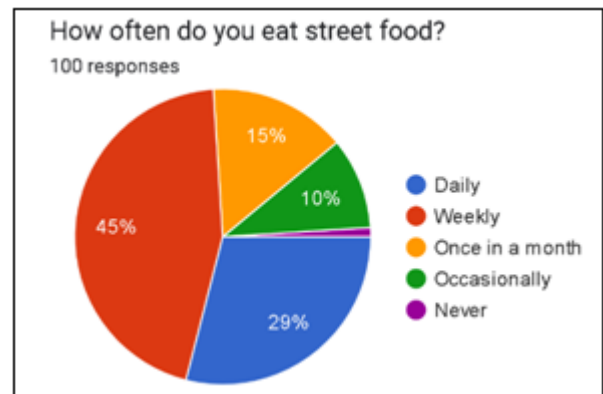


Figure 2: Figure showing about how often the respondents eat street food.
(Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it can be seen that 45% of the respondents eats street food weekly, 29% eats daily, 15% eats once in a month and 10% eats occasionally.

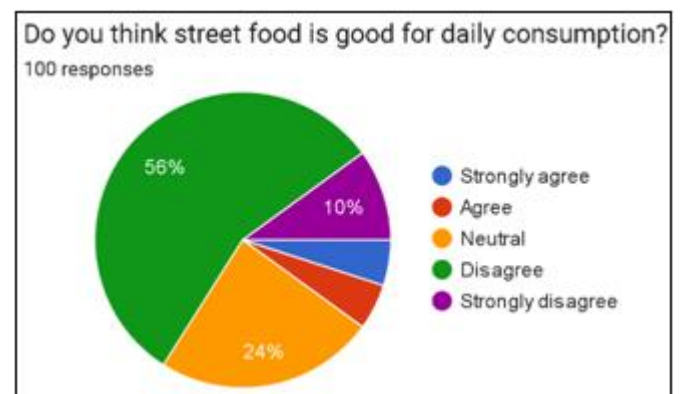


Figure 3: Figure showing whether the respondents think street food is good for daily consumption or not.
(Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it can be seen that 56% of the respondents disagrees and thinks that street

food is not good for daily consumption. While, 10% of the respondents strongly disagree, 24% thinks that its neutral. Also, 5% agrees that street food is good for daily consumption.



Figure 4: Figure showing whether the respondents are satisfied with the quality of food that the street vendors provide

(Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it can be seen that 29% of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of food that the street vendors provide, 41% thinks its neutral and 9% respondents are very satisfied. While, 19% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the quality of food and 2% are very dissatisfied.



Figure 5: Figure showing whether the respondents have any knowledge about food safety and hygiene.

(Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it can be seen that 82% of the respondents are aware about the food safety and hygiene. While 18% of the respondents are not aware about the food safety and hygiene.

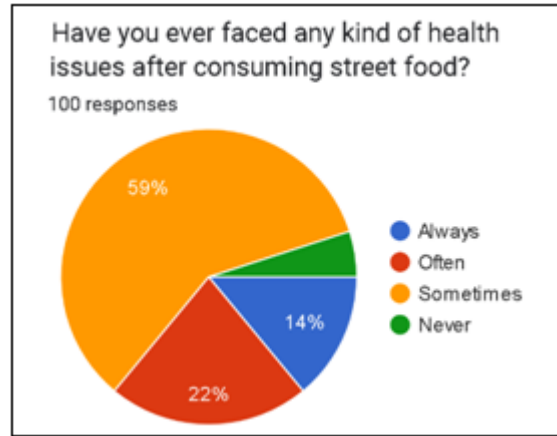


Figure 6: Figure showing whether the respondents have faced any kind of health issues after consuming street food. (Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it can be seen that 59% of the respondents sometimes face health issue after consuming street food, 22% says that they often face health issues after the consumption of street food. While, 14% always faces health issues and 5% never faces health issues.



Figure 7: Figure showing whether the respondents have any knowledge about food borne diseases which occur from unhygienic food.

(Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it can be seen that 83% of the respondents have knowledge about food borne diseases which occurs from unhygienic food. While, 17% have no knowledge about food borne diseases.

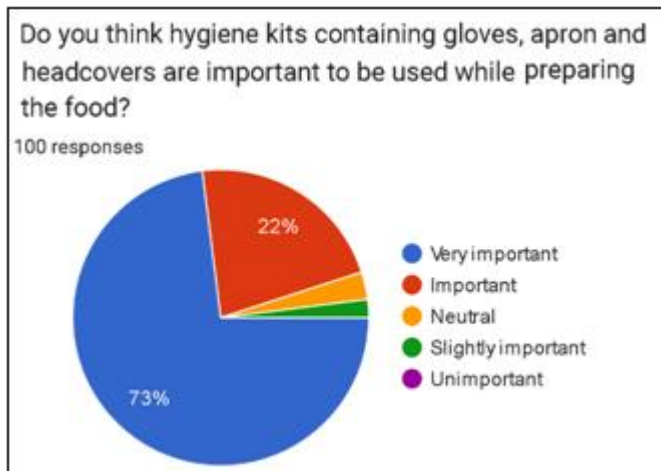


Figure 8: Figure showing weather the respondents think that hygiene kits containing gloves, apron and head covers are important to be used while preparing food by the vendors

(Source: Field study, 2023)

Interpretation: From the above figure it has been seen that 73% of the respondents says that hygiene kits containing gloves, apron and headcovers are very important while preparing the food and 22% also thinks that it is important while, 3% thinks that it is neutral.

5. Findings

- It has also been found that 96% of the consumers like to eat street food and only 4% of the respondents does not like to eat street food.
- The study also showed that 45% of the respondents eats street food weekly, 29% eats daily, 15% eats once in a month and 10% eats occasionally.
- The study also found out that 56% of the respondents thinks that street food is not good for daily consumption. While, 10% of the respondents strongly disagree, 24% thinks that its neutral. Also, 5% agrees that street food is good for daily consumption.
- The study also revealed that 29% of the respondents are satisfied with the quality of food that the street vendors provide, 41% thinks its neutral and 9% respondents are very satisfied. While, 19% of the respondents are dissatisfied with the quality of food and 2% are very dissatisfied. The uniqueness, better quality and low cost of street food attracts consumers of Guwahati city to try different varieties of items.
- The study also found out that 82% of the respondents are aware about the food safety and hygiene. Only 18% of the respondents are not aware about the food safety and hygiene.
- The study revealed that consumers eat street food because of low cost and uniqueness and it has been seen that 59% of the respondents sometimes face health issue after consuming street food, 22% says that they often face health issues after the consumption of street food. While, 14% always faces health issues and 5% never faces health issues.
- The study also revealed that majority of the consumers are aware about the food borne diseases which occurs from unhygienic food. Almost, 83% of the respondents

have knowledge about food borne diseases which occurs from unhygienic food. While, 17% have no knowledge about food borne diseases.

- The findings in the study also showed that consumers prefer the vendors to wear hand glove, hair cap and apron while preparing and serving the food. Almost, 73% of the respondents says that hygiene kits containing gloves, apron and head covers are very important while preparing the food and 22% also thinks that it is important while, 3% thinks that it is neutral.

6. Suggestions

- Street food vendors should participate in skill development or workshops so that they can acquire knowledge about food safety and hygiene and can prepare food in hygienic condition for the consumers.
- Vendors should try to wear hand gloves, apron and hair cap so that they can provide hygienic and healthy food to the consumers.
- Vendors should also provide sanitation facility, clean filtered water and clean environment around the stall so that consumers become satisfied around it.
- Consumers should acquire more knowledge about the consequences of food borne diseases and help themselves to remain healthy while consuming street food.
- Governments and other local authorities should try to create awareness enhancing campaign and advertisements so that consumers can acquire more and more knowledge about food borne diseases and safety.

7. Conclusion

Street foods are the foods or drinks that are sold by the vendors on a streets, markets, fairs and various other popular places. Street food is very much popular in different parts of the world due to its affordability and low cost and can be found with different varieties of items. The popularity of street food is rapidly increasing day by day in Guwahati city and people are becoming more and more concerned about balanced nutrition when it comes to eating street foods. The present study shows that majority of the consumers are of age below 25 years and consumers eat street food because of low cost and uniqueness. Almost 96% of the consumers likes to eat street food. The study also showed that consumers are very much aware about food safety and hygiene when it comes to street food and they prefer that vendors should wear hand glove, hair cap and apron while preparing and serving the food. Street food contribute significant diet to many people living in Guwahati city. They are popular for providing varieties of taste and uniqueness but is also regarded as unhealthy and unhygienic. Governments and policy makers should take immediate action to create awareness about food safety and hygiene to the consumers as well as the vendors so that there will be a prevention of foodborne diseases and unhygienic consumption of food

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