

How Corona Virus could Affect the Culture of Eating Special Reference to Street Food: THE NEW NORMAL

MISS SHIKHA RANKA

Assistant Professor (Shiv Charan Mathur Institute of Management & Technology, Bhilwara, Rajasthan)

Abstract: The present study aims to provide the information how the food industry will take a different shape post Covid 19 outbreak. The term “street food” defined as a ready to eat food or drink typically sold by vendors in the public area such as public road sidewalks, parks and field. Street food enterprises have been neglected in research, even though it takes up a part of food service industry. Before the virus knock, the restaurant industry was almost overheated with new places opening faster in many cities. While it’s still too early to say what the post COVID-19 scene is going to look like. COVID 19 has opened up a new world in the food industry; this would be a good chance to regroup. Now food safety is an international concern as **ALL IN THE SAME SHIP (COVID 19)**. As a descriptive research, this study aims to develop street food culture again by minimizing the risk factors associated with street food in COVID 19 tenure. The study was conducted to evaluate the need of food sanitation, food safety knowledge and practices to cope up with COVID 19 so that people can eat street food with confidence.

Findings- The street food is an important source of affordable and ready to eat food available to common people. Street food provides new employment opportunities in the cities, even though this development is positive in many aspects but in COVID 19 pandemic, it also presents new challenges in term of public health and survival of independent restaurant.

Conclusion- In the end the paper conclude that consumer are going to see sanitation station, staff wearing gloves and mask, Kitchen entirely separated from the public, consumer sit six feet away from the person next to him.

Implication for Management- Food industry rise to challenge. Everyone in the food chain, including food handlers and delivery boys need to create a new environment through scrub and concentrated effort. Those who will not change according to situation will struggle to stay in the industry. Those that will innovate and learn to cope up with new realities will grow and make money.

Keywords: Street food, COVID 19, Food Safety, Health, Risk, Food Handler, Innovation, Sanitation Station.

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I. Introduction

(WHO, 1996) The term street food refers to a wide variety of ready to eat food and Beverages sold and sometimes prepared, in public places. Street food may be consumed where it was purchased or can be taken away and eaten elsewhere.

The changes taking place in people’s life styles have caused the habit of eating outside to evolve. Because the consumers do not have time for cooking at home, the changes in consumption habits of the society, cultural interactions, fast living, and the contribution of women to work life are influencing and changing the nutrition style in crowded cities (Cuneo, 1998; Madran, 1999).

In today’s world, people prefer to buy food sold on the streets to meet their nutrition needs outside home. Street foods are being prepared and sold at places like streets, schools, train stations, bus terminals, entertainment and festival areas where people are crowded. These foods are drinks can be consumed in the run without requiring any processing or preparation afterwards (Von Holy and Makhoane, 2006; Muzaffar et al., 2009; Steyn et al., 2011).

Food sold on the streets is an integral part of a country’s cuisine. These food and drinks are important for the local eating habits to be known all around the world. Besides, they play an important role with local cuisine in preserving cultural and social heritage. Street food also appeals to tourists looking for cuisine culture and different tastes and this supports a country’s tourism. As they provide income to the sellers, they are also important in generating employment. These foods are highly demanded both by the sellers and consumers because of their tastes, easy availability, low cost, cultural and social heritage connection, and being nutritional (Barro et al., 2002; Buscemi et al., 2011; Kok and Balkaran, 2014).

Street food especially shows the eating habits of people living in big cities. Approximately 2.5 billion people around the world consume street food every day. Especially in Far East cuisine culture, production and selling of street food has become a part of social life. As the people in developing countries spend an important amount of their budget for eating outside, street food has become an alternative eating trend. In Latin America people spend nearly 30% of their budget for street food (Mensah et al., 2002; Muinde and Kuria, 2005; FAO, 2011; Ackah et al., 2011; Badrie et al., 2013).

Preparing and selling food on the streets provide a constant income for millions of uneducated people. However, during the selling of food on the streets, some risks arise. Some of these risks are causing accidents on busy traffic, being fined because of occupying the pavements, doing sales illegally, or employing children as workers (FAO, 2011). Social and structural specialities arising in some cities of West Africa due to changes in life conditions, have increased demand for street food (Canet and N'Diaye, 1996). Since the money spent on street food is not too much, helps especially poor families to meet their daily nutritional requirements (Chakravarty and Canet, 1996; Van't Riet et al., 2003; Ohiokpehai, 2003). Regarding the employment, street food provides a good job opportunity and income for sellers with small capitals and especially for women. It is seen that in Bangkok, 82% of street food processing is carried out by women and that employment opportunities are good. While this situation creates a constant income for women, it also creates a constant nutrition source for working women (WHO, 1996; Chung et al., 2010).

In another study it is seen that although the food sold in the open may not be produced and sold under appropriate conditions, people cannot give up consuming them. Especially it is seen that students think that food sold in the open are unhealthy and nutrition wise low, but that they prefer them because they are cheap and quickly served. It is also determined that there is a positive correlation between the frequency of eating outside and consuming food sold in the open (Sert and Kapusuz, 2010).

Street food is consumed in many countries as food, drinks, and snacks which reflect traditional cuisine culture in countries together with their content, preparation, sales methods, and consumption ways (FAO, 2010; Campbell, 2011). Bagels, pastry, grilled sheep's intestines, meatballs in bread, kebab, lamb doner, steak tartar a la turca, pancake, chichpea-rice, mussel, corns, boza, chestnuts, sahlepe, licorice, paste, cotton candy, wafer, sugar-coated apple, ice cream, etc can be given as examples of street food widely consumed all around Turkey.

II. Research Methodology-

2.1 Research Method- A Qualitative and Descriptive method of research using primary and secondary data. The secondary data was used to formulate a conceptual model indicating the strategies to enhance the safety related to hygienic street food. Primary data was collected through interview method. The researcher interviewed 50 Restaurant owner and street food vendors in Bhilwara city during the COVID 19 pandemic. The focus of interview was to analyse the new food trends and to understand what hygiene standards the restaurant owners and vendors would following.

2.2 Objectives- Objective of research is one the significant elements for conducting any research because it helps in determining the chance of conducting the study. Basically, the broad aim of all researches is to contribute new knowledge in the existing knowledge.

- To analyse the reasons, why street food are perceived to be a major public health risk?
- To analyse the strategies to enhance the food safety.
- To analyse the guidelines of food handling for basic food safety.
- To analyse food trends that will define New Normal Post **COVID-19**.

2.2.1 ASSESSMENT OF STREET FOOD AS REGARDS TO PUBLIC HEALTH RISK

In most Asian countries, demand for eating out increased with the decreased in eating at home due to urban spread as a result of rapid transformation. Street foods in these days are an important source of reasonable and ready to eat food available to common people.

Food safety is defined as a degree of assurance that food will not cause illness or harm to the consumer when it is prepared, served and eaten according to its planned use. Now food safety is a global concern.

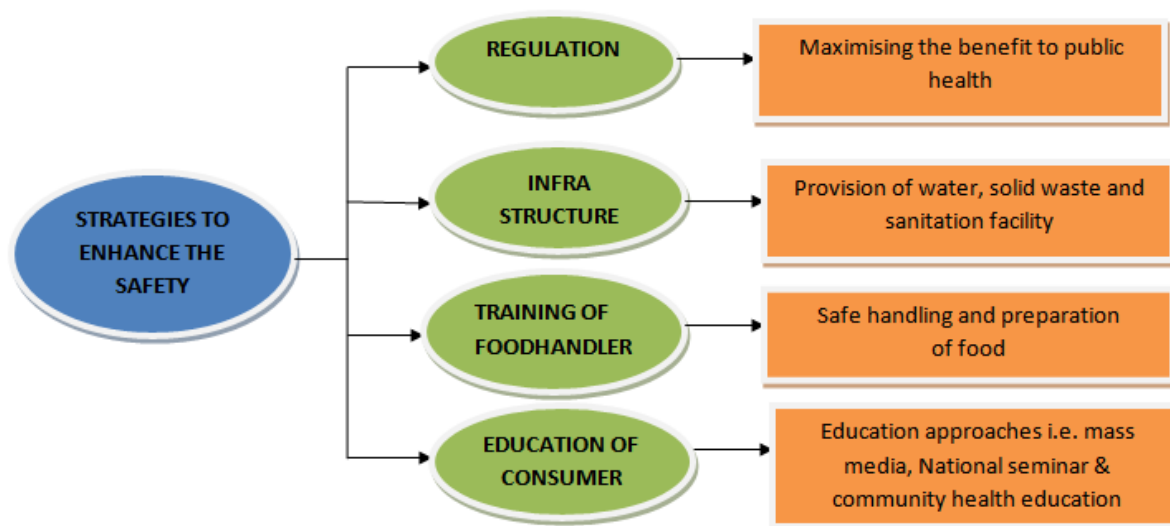
The wide consumption of street food around the world increases the importance of safety and health issues (Canet and N'Diaye, 1996). Street foods are not reliable, they also carry diseases originating from food sources in many countries (Omemu and Aderoju, 2008; Biswas et al., 2010; Nunes et al., 2010; Mamun et al., 2013).

One of the reasons for spreading of diseases originating from food sources is that street food sellers do not have sufficient information about food safety. Besides, in various researches made in some countries, insufficiencies were found out relating with application of hygiene and sanitation, preparation of food,

food safety rules and knowledge of street food sellers. Poor hygiene, difficulty in obtaining drinking water, not removing wastes and similar environmental problems and the fact that street food are exempt from legal legislations, all these factors increase risks in ensuring food safety (Rheinlander et al., 2008; Omemu and Aderoju, 2008; Abdalla et al., 2009; WHO, 2010; FAO, 2011; Choudhury et al., 2011; Rane, 2011; Kealesitse and Kabama, 2012). Food originate pathogens are seen as a health threat during preparation and protection stages depending on the type of food. Abibo and Lowatt (2015) conducted, they have stated that food processing places, restaurants, food sellers, schools, and houses are influential in development of diseases originating from food.

Street food safety is influenced starting from the quality of raw materials to food processing and storing and similar steps in the process. Besides the fact that raw materials used in these products are of poor quality, these foods are stored under wrong and unsafe conditions for a long time. Selling points of street food have a limited infrastructure as regards to clean drinking water, toilets, freezing-ice creams, disinfection, hand washing, and removal of wastes. In most cases, since water does not come from taps constantly, water storage is required and this kind of water is not appropriate for hand or dish washing, cooking, or drinking, and contamination factors occur. Besides, street food is subject to the contact of insects, rodents, domestic and other animals and unfavourable environmental conditions like air pollution (Hanashiro et al., 2005; Lucca and Torres, 2006).

2.2.2 STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE FOOD SAFETY



CONCEPTUAL MODEL -STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE SAFETY RELATED TO HYGIENIC STREET FOOD

Strategies to enhance the safety of food are developed after the study and appropriate information on local food, present pandemic and practices. The factors influence the safety included in this model is based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) based studies.

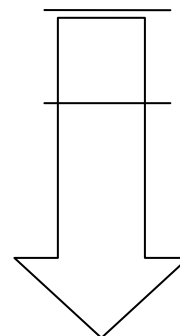
- **REGULATION** is a common approach to controlling the street-vended food sector. However, wide regulation of street vendors may only guarantee that all will be, in some manner, in violation of the law (and subject to penalties) and does little to educate street-vendors in the most important aspects of safe food handling. HACCP can be used to focus regulations and scrutiny resources on the most critical foods and operations thus maximizing the benefits to public health from given resources.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE** has focused on the provision of water, handling liquid and solid waste and sanitation facilities. Some technological advances will improve food safety. Design and construction of vending cart, stall and market reduce the risk of microbiological hazards.
- **TRAINING OF FOOD HANDLERS** regarding the hazards confronting their stuff, safe handling and preparation of foodstuff and good sanitized practice is an essential part of any approach to improve the safety of street-vended food. Ongoing education and training sessions at intervals are strongly suggested. Certification may prove a useful device to identify those with suitable training. Such certification could also be used to give confidence to consumers to consider food safety in their food choice decisions.
- **EDUCATION OF CONSUMER** regarding the food handling practices, risk or diseases associated with food, benefits of street food and finally safe & unsafe food choice. Through purchasing power, consumer can also influence the vendors to change their food handling practices. Ultimately consumer will bear the result

of unsafe food. There is a need to encourage consumers to be involved in efforts to improve food safety. Approaches to improve the education consumer of street food regarding food safety may be integrated into general and health education. WHO generally recommends that consumers make sure that their food has been thoroughly cooked and is still hot when served?

2.2.3 COVID 19- GENERAL GUIDELINES

Neither food nor food packaging are considered significant ways of spreading the virus causing COVID 19. However, it is always important to follow well hygiene practices when handling or preparing food.

- **PERSONAL HYGIENE-** Make sure to wash hands carefully and often while preparing food. Cover any cut with waterproof bandages. Don't prepare or handle food for others if you had diarrhea or vomited in the last 48 hours.
- **CROSS- CONTAMINATION-** it is the transfer of an injurious substance from one food item to another, usually from uncooked to a cook or ready to eat food. As a preventive measure, wash your hand and base after contact with raw food. Use separate utensils and chopping board for raw and ready to eat or cooked food.
- **SHARING FOOD WITH OTHERS-** There is no signal that food or food packaging material has served in major connection to virus transmission. Handling of food packaging should be followed with hand washing or hand sanitizer. It is not suggested to stored ready food outside of the home, in cars or garages.
- **TEMPERATURE DANGER ZONE-** Injurious germs grow fastest between 41°F and 135 °F. Minimizing time in this 135°F range called temperature danger zone, reduce growth of these harmful bacteria. Food that can support the increase of harmful bacteria should not be left in this temperature range for more than 4 hours.



2.2.4 FOOD TRENDS THAT WILL DEFINE NEW NORMAL POST COVID-19

Thousands of restaurants have close down over the past few days to prevent the spread of COVID 19. While there is no date set for when restaurant can securely reopen, one thing is certain: the **New Normal** (Partying, eating out, Formal & Casual dining, Home delivery, eating-at-home, Street food, Snacking, Tiffin-boxes) is going to appear and feel very different.

- **END OF SOCIAL DINING-** One of the nicest trend that was rising in India was social dining, where shared tables in restaurants and bars attempted to create relation between strangers over food and drink. After COVID 19, this experiment is likely to be nipped in the bud.
- **COOKING AT HOME (MOMINOS IS BETTER THAN DOMINOS) -** Every adversity carries with it the new way of opportunity. MOM MADE is the new normal during pandemic. There may be new interest in home food, as something to be cooked in personalised way. Persons are showing interest in sharing recipes, cooking tips and pictures of home cooked meals on social media.
- **CLEANER NOT CHEAPER FOOD-** In COVID 19 times, even price responsive consumers finally become more aware of quality ingredient grown in safe and sustainable ways, cooked by well skilled staff and served in clean conditions. It may cut down the regularity of eating out.
- **MORE HOME-DELIVERY; RISE OF PREMIUM DELIVERIES-** Restaurant industry was hurting even before COVID 19, delivery service was on an upswing. Customer showing preference to enhanced “experience” even in delivered food. In the COVID 19 tenure, restaurant promised to provide higher quality food cooked in cloud kitchens and delivered to the comfort of homes. This trend is expecting to pick up when the corona virus run away.
- **NO SHARING-** No sharing is going to be the innovative companionship drill. It is not only going to be about contact-less facility but minimal contact between those at the same table, desk and counter. Restaurants will have to re-evaluate menus, portions (Pizza slice) and cater to provide to this new reality.
- **GREATER TECHNOLOGY- No waiting time, No contact.** With the advanced technology, customer can reserve the table, pre book the food, payment via smart phone and app. It will reduce the waiting time and minimise the individual contact.

- **SMALLER WEDDINGS-** All major events of 2020 have already been cancelled or delayed, it also include the INDIAN BIG PLUMP WEDDINGS. **COVID 19** declined banqueting and catering business in India.
- **VEGAN AND HEALTHY FOOD-** During COVID 19 tenure, people has become more conscious about the healthy food and this market will see a high rise in vegan only brands. There is increasing demand for organic food; vegan, vegetarian and other healthy food as a result of pandemic and this trend will become a way of life for many.
- **MEAT ALTERNATIVES & MOCK MEAT-** People are switching from animal based diet to a plant based diet, we will see the popularisation of mock meat in new menus of restaurants.

III. Public Queries Related To Take Out Covid 19

- **WHAT IS THE RISK OF TAKEOUT OR DRIVE- THRU FOOD?**
 - There is no current signal that takeout or drive-thru meals will increase illness.
 - This option a good management choice, especially for high risk and elderly crowd as it helps keep social distancing and trim down the number of touch point.
- **WHAT IS THE RISK OF FOOD DELIVERED TO HOME?**
 - Food delivery helps maintain social distancing and decrease the number of touch point between preparation and serving of food.
 - Many delivery programs have also instituted no touch/no interaction options, which further cut the risk.
- **CAN I GET COVID 19 FROM TOUCHING FOOD OR PACKAGING EXPOSED TO CORONA VIRUS?**
 - The risk of transfer of viruses is very low, based on current research.
 - To further minimize risk, handling food packaging should be followed by hand washing or sanitizer.
- **IF AN EMPLOYEE AT A FOOD ESTABLISHMENT BECAME INFECTED WITH CORONAVIRUS, WOULD THE FOOD PRODUCED AT THAT FACILITY BE SAFE TO EAT?**
 - Food establishment personnel who are ill with COVID 19 should be excluded from work activities as COVID 19 is thought to spread mainly person to person through respiratory droplets.
- **CAN I GET SICKWITH COVID 19 FROM TOUCHING FOOD, THE FOOD PACKAGING OR FOOD CONTACT SURFACES, IF THE CORONA VIRUS WAS PRESENT ON IT?**
 - Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID 19.
 - Corona virus need a living host to grow in and cannot grow in food.
 - Like other viruses, it is possible that the virus that causes COVID 19 can survive on surface.

IV. Findings

According to WHO (1989) food handling personnel play important role in ensuring food safety throughout the chain of food production and storage. Mishandling and disregard of hygienic measures on the part of food vendors may enable pathogenic bacteria to come into contact, with and in some cases survival and multiply in sufficient numbers of cause illness in the consumer.

Key findings of the WHO survey of street-vended foods

- 74% of countries reported street-vended foods to be a significant part of the urban food supply;
- Street-vended foods included foods as diverse as meat, fish, fruits, vegetables, grains, cereals, frozen produce and beverages;
- Types of preparation included foods without any preparation (65%)*, ready-to-eat food (97%) and food cooked on site (82%);
- Vending facilities varied from mobile carts to fixed stalls and food centres;
- Infrastructure developments were relatively limited with restricted access to potable water (47%), toilets (15%), refrigeration (43%) and washing and waste disposal facilities;
- The majority of countries reported contamination of food (from raw food, infected handlers and inadequately cleaned equipment) and time and temperature abuse to be the major factors contributing to food borne disease;
- Most countries reported insufficient inspection personnel, insufficient application of the HACCP concept and noted that registration, training and medical examinations were not amongst selected management strategies

Key findings from Data collection-

- The **COVID 19** pandemic impacted the food service industry due to government closure, resulting in layoff of workers and loss of income for restaurant owners and food vendors.
- The value of healthy food will get improved in this sensitive time.
- The industry will give more focus on home delivery.
- Restaurant will have less seats and self serving buffet are suspended.
- Menus with greater focus on well oriented foodstuff sections for healthier meals.
- Guest facing employees getting adequate training on social distancing norms as well as the newest safety guidelines.
- People will be more cautious and the places they prefer to go to.
- This pandemic will provide new employment opportunities as highly talented freelance chefs will be available at home.
- White gloved service, masks and hair nets will have to be introduced by all food establishments.
- Business at organized restaurant has decrease 90% since the lockdown began on March 21.

V. Conclusion & Recommendations

Street food in recent time is an important source of affordable and ready to consume food available to everyone. The current pandemic is all about transformation in food consumption, eating habits, new concerns about hygiene, personal safety and social distancing. There is a possibility of a suspiciously larger decline in animal protein utilization (as an outcome of fears – that animals might be hosts of the virus). The restaurant industry will see a new actuality, post COVID-19. Revitalization will be a challenge for all restaurants: both large and small. It will be a new normal to normal that won't happen immediately. Perhaps the one positive outcome of the disaster will be a chance for the restaurant industry to renew itself by considering that the need of the time is hygiene, food safety principles. The food industry will have to go in for some major alteration in the future. **“We like to stay close to each other. Sharing time with family and friends is kind of essential for us but the existing situation demands the reverse from us”** as we have to chase rules but ultimately we have to come to a point where we can be jointly again. Restaurants will have to keep up improving their hygiene standards for their guests' safety, in some cases, restaurateurs will have to reducing tables, providing a more comfy sitting space between dining parties. On a separate note, Healthy and Organic spending will most likely see an uptick. We have always known that, “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Amongst prosperous Indians, there is likely to be an increase in demand for raw food, vegan, vegetarian and other healthy foods as a result of the virus. The present is impractical to decode right now, focus is on the future. The food industry will most certainly have a great comeback post COVID 19. The time should be seen as an opportunity, as People are looking for new and classic things.

How should food be handed during the **COVID 19**?

- Follow good hygiene and food safety practices when preparing food:
- Get food from reputable resources
- Cook food carefully and retain safety holding temperature.
- Use good individual hygiene
- Clean and disinfect surfaces and utensils.

Let's wish the vaccine is discovered soon.

VI. Implication For Management

Food industry rise to challenge. Everyone in the food chain, including food handlers and delivery boys need to create a new environment through scrub and concentrated effort. Those who will not change according to situation will struggle to stay in the industry. Those that will innovate and learn to cope up with new realities will grow and make money. There is a need to working on how to get food industry forward. After the situation normalise, these food outlets will have to give more concern about wellbeing and sanitation issues to get customer back.

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