

A Dual Perspective on Street Vending In Coimbatore: Analyzing Consumer Attitudes, Preferences, and the Challenges Faced By Vendors in Urban Markets

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Abstract: Street vending plays a pivotal role in the urban informal economy, providing accessible goods and services while offering livelihoods to many. This study, seeks to explore the interplay between consumer expectations and the realities of street vendors in the city. The purpose of the study is to evaluate consumer preferences and attitudes toward street vending, with an emphasis on aspects like accessibility, cost, hygienic conditions, and product quality. It also looks into the difficulties that vendors encounter, such as socioeconomic weaknesses, competition, license concerns, and space limitations. This study uses surveys and interviews as part of a mixed-methods strategy to gather information from sellers and customers in Coimbatore's major urban marketplaces. The results are anticipated to shed light on how customers view street vending and how it affects vendor behavior. With suggestions to close the gap between customer expectations and vendor capabilities, the study also seeks to identify the main obstacles to vendors' viability and expansion. Lawmakers, urban planners, and non-governmental organizations will use the results as a foundation to develop policies that promote a street vending-friendly environment and raise customer happiness. By examining the socioeconomic aspects of street vending in Coimbatore, this study adds to the larger conversation on urban informality. In order to create thriving urban economies, it emphasizes the necessity of inclusive urban development policies that acknowledge the interdependencies between vendors and customers.

Keywords: street vending, consumer attitudes, vendor challenges, urban markets, Coimbatore, informal economy, urban development.

INTRODUCTION

Street vending is a ubiquitous feature of urban economies, particularly in developing countries, where it serves as a vital source of livelihood for millions. It is an integral component of the informal economy, bridging gaps in employment and providing essential goods and services at affordable prices. The vibrant street markets contribute not only

to the economic vitality of cities but also to their cultural identity and social dynamics. However, street vending remains fraught with challenges, encompassing legal, social, and operational dimensions, which impact both vendors and consumers. Coimbatore's urban marketplaces, renowned for their accessibility and diversity, have long served as a center for street hawking. In order to meet the demands of different customer categories, vendors provide a broad range of products, from household goods and handicrafts to fresh fruit and street cuisine. For customers, street vending offers distinctive shopping experiences, affordability, and convenience. Despite these benefits, Coimbatore's street sellers encounter many challenges, including as strict legal requirements, rivalry from official retail establishments, and restricted access to essential infrastructure. These difficulties are exacerbated by changing consumer tastes, which are impacted by variables including education, money, and growing consciousness of safety and hygienic requirements. This study's dual viewpoint emphasizes how vendor challenges and customer perceptions interact. Evaluating the viability of street vending requires an understanding of consumer attitudes, preferences for certain products, price sensitivity, and perceptions of quality. Investigating the difficulties faced by vendors such as harassment from authorities, a lack of defined vending zones, and insufficient support systems also helps to identify the structural problems impeding the sector's survival. The study attempts to offer a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of street vending in Coimbatore by looking at these two viewpoints.

The informal economy of street vending has long been seen as one that offers substantial job opportunities with little financial outlay. A vital economic safety net in Coimbatore, where fast urbanization has brought in a flood of migrants

looking for work, is street vending. Vendors frequently function without official acknowledgement or assistance, depending instead on their entrepreneurial abilities and flexibility to negotiate the intricate urban environment. Despite having a positive impact on the local economy, their operations are frequently disregarded because they lack institutional backing and social acceptance. A number of factors influence consumer perceptions of street vending, such as pricing, convenience, and cultural affinity. Since street vendors meet the daily requirements of the urban population, they are sometimes seen as a representation of grassroots entrepreneurship. But there are also complaints about the sector's hygienic practices, quality, and invasion of public areas. These beliefs affect how consumers behave, which in turn affects the demand for goods sold by street vendors as well as the stability of their revenue. It's critical to comprehend these mindsets in order to pinpoint places where suppliers might enhance their offerings and adjust to shifting customer demands. Coimbatore's street sellers deal with a variety of issues that have their roots in structural deficiencies. Regulations that restrict the scope of organized vending operations include the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, and the absence of appropriate licensing procedures. Additionally, vendors deal with competition from official retail enterprises that are frequently better suited to satisfy the needs of urban consumers, as well as harassment from municipal authorities. Inadequate access to sanitary facilities, waste management facilities, and clean water are among the infrastructure-related issues that make street vendors' problems worse. Despite these obstacles, street vendors are crucial to fostering resilience and inclusion in urban areas. Low-income households are among the varied customer groups they serve, and they depend on the accessibility and affordability of street selling goods. Additionally, by reflecting the customs and gastronomic diversity of the area, street selling adds to the cultural life of urban areas. When structural issues are addressed through focused interventions and inclusive policies, the street vending industry in Coimbatore has enormous growth potential. In Coimbatore, street vending serves as a microcosm of the opportunities and difficulties found in urban informal economies. Using a dual viewpoint, this study aims to clarify the intricate relationships between customers and vendors while providing practical advice for

advancing the sustainability and inclusivity of street vending in urban marketplaces. While addressing the structural obstacles that impede the sector's expansion, this study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of the industry, acknowledging its contributions to urban vibrancy and economic resilience.

OBJECTIVES

1. To Analyze Consumer Attitudes and Preferences toward street vendors in Coimbatore.
2. To Examine the Challenges Faced by Street Vendors in Coimbatore
3. To Provide insights into the interplay between consumer demands and the capabilities of vendors.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Street vendors support millions of people's livelihoods while providing reasonably priced goods and services, making them an essential component of metropolitan economies. In Coimbatore, a city renowned for its fast urbanization and vibrant culture, street vendors sell a variety of goods to meet the demands of a wide spectrum of customers. But there are serious issues facing the industry that could jeopardize its viability and expansion, necessitating a thorough comprehension of both customer sentiment and vendor difficulties. Customers play a crucial role in the street vending ecology, and elements including product quality, cost, convenience, and cleanliness affect their purchasing decisions. Despite the accessibility and affordability that street sellers provide, the need for street vending has been impacted by changing consumer behavior brought about by increased competition from formal retail and e-commerce platforms. To find possibilities for suppliers to adjust to changing market trends, it is essential to comprehend these customer attitudes. At the same time, street sellers encounter many obstacles, such as undesignated vending areas, regulatory obstacles, police harassment, and poor infrastructure accessibility. Limited financial inclusion and use of technology exacerbate these problems by preventing suppliers from updating their business practices to satisfy customer demands. Public health issues pertaining to sanitation and hygiene further damage customer confidence, posing new difficulties for sellers. In order to investigate how vendor problems and consumer desires interact in Coimbatore, this study takes a dual viewpoint. The goal of the study is to offer practical advice for

developing a sustainable and equitable street vending ecosystem by tackling these interrelated problems.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design: The study adopts a mixed-methods research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of street vending in Coimbatore. The dual perspective focuses on both consumer attitudes and preferences as well as the challenges faced by street vendors in urban markets.

2. Study Area: The research is conducted in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, a major urban center known for its vibrant street vending culture. The study includes various urban locations where street vending is prominent, such as marketplaces, commercial streets, and residential areas.

3. Population and Sampling

- Consumers: Residents and visitors of Coimbatore who engage with street vendors.
- Vendors: Street vendors operating in urban markets of Coimbatore.

Sampling Technique: A stratified random sampling method is used to ensure representation from different categories of consumers and vendors. Stratification includes:

- Consumer demographics (age, gender, income level).
- Vendor characteristics (type of goods sold, location, and duration of operation).

Sample Size: 200 consumers and 100 vendors are selected to provide a balanced and reliable dataset for analysis.

4. Data Collection Methods

Primary Data:

- Survey Method: Structured questionnaires are used to collect data from consumers and vendors.
 - For consumers: Questions focus on attitudes, preferences, spending patterns, and reasons for purchasing from street vendors.
 - For vendors: Questions focus on operational challenges, income patterns, regulatory issues, and customer interactions.
- Interviews: Semi-structured interviews are conducted with selected vendors to gain in-depth insights into their challenges and coping strategies.

- Observation: Non-participant observation is employed to study the dynamics of street vending, consumer-vendor interactions, and the physical setup of vending spaces.

Secondary Data: Review of reports, municipal records, academic studies, and policy documents related to street vending in Coimbatore and similar urban settings.

5. Tools for Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode) to summarize consumer and vendor data.
- Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests and t-tests, to analyze associations and differences among variables.
- Factor analysis to identify key factors influencing consumer attitudes and vendor challenges.

Qualitative Data Analysis:

- Thematic analysis is used to interpret data from interviews and observations.
- Content analysis is applied to secondary data to identify recurring themes and policy implications.

6. Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent is obtained from all participants.
- Confidentiality and anonymity of participants are ensured.
- Ethical approval is obtained from the relevant institutional review board.

7. Limitations of the Study

- The study is limited to urban markets in Coimbatore and may not reflect conditions in rural areas or other cities.
- Self-reported data may introduce response bias.
- Time and resource constraints may limit the depth of qualitative analysis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brata Aloysius Gunadi (2008) carried out a study concentrating on the "Vulnerability of Urban Informal Street Vendors" in Java since the economic crisis that struck the region hard in 1997–1998 had also reversed the Indonesia's economic formalization tendency. The survey was conducted on multiple highways in the districts of Yogyakarta and Sleeman.

Three categories of street vendors are represented in these examples: food vendors and non-food vendors. This poll is used to evaluate the risk guide for street vendors. According to the survey, most Yogyakarta road suppliers are just somewhat vulnerable. Food vendors are generally more susceptible than other suppliers. Instead of selling, uncertainty also fluctuates.

Muinde, O. and Kuria, E. (2005) Clean and healthful food seller procedures were examined in their article titled "Hygienic and Sanitary Practices of Vendor of Street Foods." A descriptive survey design was used in the study, and 80 street food vendors, a plan for interviews, and an observation checklist. According to the survey, 62% of respondents learned how to prepare meals, and 33% received their education from their elders in an informal setting. According to the study's findings, cereal foods and prepared foods which were rarely utilized to make raw foods were only stored in open spaces at closed temperatures in cabinets, plastic bowls, pots, and buckets. Road food vendors did not take care to adhere to sanitary and hygienic standards. The United Nations agency's quadrennial measure is probably going to market food, maybe with an emphasis on foodborne illnesses. It is recommended that the city council implement street food centers, to provide street food vendors with training on hygiene, sanitation, and the authority of the Code of Institute and public health authorities for street food.

Table 1
Consumers Attitude and Preference to Purchase Street Vendors Products

Reasons	Number	Mean	Rank
Affordability	300	2.70	2
Freshness and Quality	300	2.45	1
Convenience	300	3.56	3
Personalized Service	300	6.72	7
Variety of Products	300	5.08	6
Support for Local Economy	300	6.88	8
Cultural and Traditional Appeal	300	4.69	5
Hygiene Concerns	300	3.66	4

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

The table highlights consumers' attitudes and preferences toward purchasing products from street vendors, ranked by their mean scores. Freshness and quality (ranked 1st, mean 2.45) is the most significant reason, indicating that consumers prioritize the perceived freshness and standard of products.

Turner, S. Schoenberger, L. (2012) conducted a study on "Street Vendor Livelihoods and Everyday Politics in Hanoi, Vietnam: The Seeds of a Diverse Economy". To find out how it reacts in clusters to such revanchist reaction, policies, in order to evaluate this study, extensive conversations with both roaming and stabilizing companies were conducted. The goal of the central government of Vietnam and the Hanoi local authority is to create a contemporary, "civilized" capital while projecting a certain image of safety, order, and progress. Despite both overt and covert resistance strategies, the study indicates that alternative economic views and well-known "community economies" are still uncommon.

B. Balasubramanian et al. (2012) According to research conducted in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, the economic profile of women street vendors revealed that they instead boost revenue and gain advantages by offering higher-value goods, such as household goods, instead of providing more individual fruits and veggies. You would want to set aside your salary for their children's education because it was slightly higher. Additionally, street sellers preferred to work from residential areas, even if those who make more money can contact potential clients more easily and have a higher opportunity.

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

Mean Ranking Technique

Affordability (ranked 2nd, mean 2.70) is another key factor, showcasing price sensitivity and the value-for-money appeal of street vendors. Convenience ranks 3rd (mean 3.56), reflecting the ease of access and proximity of vendors. Hygiene concerns (ranked 4th, mean 3.66) highlight a moderate influence, as some consumers may be cautious about cleanliness. Cultural and traditional appeal (ranked 5th, mean 4.69) and variety of products (ranked 6th, mean 5.08)

show their role in shaping preferences, albeit to a lesser extent. Personalized service (ranked 7th, mean 6.72) and support for the local economy (ranked last,

mean 6.88) are less influential, suggesting that practical factors outweigh social or relational considerations in consumer decision-making.

Table 2
Problems Faced By Buyers When Purchasing Products From Street Vendors

Problem	Mean	Rank
Quality Concerns	2.78	1
Hygiene Issues	3.36	3
Limited Product Variety	2.93	2
Pricing Ambiguities	5.95	7
No Guarantee or Return Policies	4.81	6
Accessibility and Convenience	3.77	4
Overcrowding and Safety Concerns	3.90	5
Awareness and Information Gaps	6.08	8

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

The table outlines the major problems faced by buyers when purchasing from street vendors, ranked by their mean scores. Quality concerns are ranked first (mean 2.78), highlighting them as the most significant issue. Buyers prioritize consistent and acceptable product quality as a major expectation. Limited product variety ranks second (mean 2.93), showing dissatisfaction with the restricted range of options available. Hygiene issues are third (mean

3.36), reflecting concerns about cleanliness in handling and storing products. Moderate challenges include accessibility and convenience (ranked 4th, mean 3.77) and overcrowding and safety concerns (5th, mean 3.90), suggesting physical and situational barriers to shopping. No guarantee or return policies (6th, mean 4.81) and pricing ambiguities (7th, mean 5.95) reflect risks and uncertainties for buyers. Finally, awareness and information gaps rank last (mean 6.08), indicating they are the least significant issue, possibly due to sufficient consumer knowledge in most cases.

Table 3
Challenges Faced By The Street Vendors In Coimbatore

Challenges	Mean	Rank
Lack of Legal Recognition	5.77	5
Limited Space	4.78	4
Access to Credit	3.32	3
Competition	1.87	1
Weather Vulnerability	6.98	7
Economic Uncertainty	2.09	2
Lack of Institutional Support	6.54	6

Source: Primary Data

INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

The table highlights the challenges faced by street vendors in Coimbatore, ranked by their mean scores. Competition ranks as the most critical challenge (mean 1.87), indicating intense rivalry among vendors and with organized retailers. Economic uncertainty (ranked 2nd, mean 2.09) underscores their vulnerability to fluctuating demand and financial instability. Access to credit (ranked 3rd, mean 3.32) shows the difficulty vendors face in obtaining affordable financing. Limited space

(ranked 4th, mean 4.78) reflects constraints in finding adequate and secure vending areas. Lack of legal recognition (ranked 5th, mean 5.77) highlights the insecurity vendors face without proper licensing or protection. Lack of institutional support (ranked 6th, mean 6.54) further stresses their isolation from supportive networks. Finally, weather vulnerability (ranked 7th, mean 6.98) is a significant concern, with exposure to extreme weather impacting operations. These challenges call for targeted interventions to improve vendors' livelihoods and operational stability.

SUGGESTIONS

For Vendors:

1. Skill Development:
 - Organize training programs on customer service, inventory management, and digital payment systems to enhance operational efficiency.
2. Access to Microfinance:
 - Facilitate easy access to low-interest loans and financial support schemes for vendors to stabilize and grow their businesses.
3. Improved Infrastructure:
 - Provide designated vending zones equipped with basic amenities like water supply, waste disposal, and electricity.
4. Vendor Associations:
 - Strengthen vendor associations to collectively address grievances, negotiate with authorities, and foster peer support networks.

For Consumers:

1. Awareness Campaigns:
 - Conduct awareness programs to highlight the benefits of supporting local vendors, including affordability and cultural value.
2. Feedback Mechanisms:
 - Introduce structured feedback systems to allow consumers to share suggestions for improving vendor services and offerings.

For Policymakers and Authorities:

1. Regulatory Reforms:
 - Simplify licensing processes and establish clear guidelines for street vending to reduce bureaucratic hurdles.
2. Regularization of Vending Zones:
 - Develop formal vending zones to minimize conflicts with pedestrians, shop owners, and traffic flow.
3. Capacity Building:
 - Conduct workshops for municipal authorities to sensitively manage street vending while balancing urban planning priorities.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation:
 - Set up mechanisms to regularly monitor the implementation of policies and assess their impact on both vendors and consumers.

Collaborative Initiatives:

1. Public-Private Partnerships:
 - Encourage collaborations between municipal authorities, NGOs, and private organizations to provide resources and support for street vendors.

2. Technology Integration:

- Leverage technology to create digital platforms for vendor registration, e-payments, and customer engagement.

By implementing these suggestions, the study aims to create a sustainable environment for street vending in Coimbatore, balancing the interests of consumers, vendors, and policymakers.

CONCLUSION

Street vending is an integral part of Coimbatore's urban economy, serving as both a livelihood source for vendors and a convenient shopping option for consumers. This study has delved into the dual perspectives of consumer attitudes and vendor challenges, revealing a dynamic interplay between the two. Consumers value street vending for its affordability, accessibility, and cultural significance, yet their preferences are influenced by factors such as product quality, hygiene, and convenience. On the other hand, vendors face significant challenges, including lack of proper infrastructure, financial instability, and regulatory complexities. The results emphasize the necessity of a multifaceted strategy to encourage and maintain street vending. Simplifying legal frameworks, designating specific vending zones, and establishing vendor associations to strengthen their collective voice are some of the recommendations. Vendors can be further empowered to adjust to shifting consumer preferences and market dynamics by utilizing technology, improving their skills, and granting them access to microfinance. At the same time, consumer awareness initiatives can help close the gap between perceptions and reality, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between suppliers and their customers. In order to solve systemic problems and guarantee an inclusive urban environment that meets the demands of street vendors without sacrificing the goals of urban planning, policy-level actions are essential. Community stakeholders, corporate organizations, and local government representatives working together can open the door to long-term solutions that strike a balance between social justice and economic prosperity. In conclusion, Coimbatore Street vending is a prime example of adaptability and resiliency in the face of urban difficulties. Street vending may continue to flourish as an essential part of the city's socioeconomic fabric by creating a conducive environment through changes to policies, capacity building, and consumer engagement. The significance of approaching street selling from two

angles is shown by this study, which guarantees that future urban development plans take into account the viewpoints of both vendors and customers.

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