

## Street Food Business Model Thriving for Centuries as An Attractive Informal Vertical of Hotel Industry, Delivering Delightful Products and Experience to Tourists - Inland and Global.

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### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

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**Introduction:** Street food is a branch-out of Street vending and the reports authentically confirm that 20% of the street vending business in India is of 'Street food'. The business model- Street food, though grew on the sidelines, as an unorganized-sector arm of food business, showed that it always had the potential to survive by delighting the foodies, since the business model has had clear objectives. Street Food vendors, as mentioned in the draft National Policy, are persons who offer food/s for sale to the public from their temporarily built up structure or mobile / moving stalls. Speaking about Street-Food and the Vendors, specially, they belong to the marginalized urban poor communities. Despite their status in society, they play a dynamic role in the economy – providing foods, which are tasty, cheaper and available at ease, saving time and travel, to many needy buyers. The contribution to economy on account of sale of street foods is quite sizable, especially in the developing countries. Street food - their sale and consumption –has been meeting the needs of rural migrants, who keep moving to urban centres in search of gainful employment. Since the vendors have low or lack of skills, Street food business, as a family/small team venture, turns out to support the livelihoods of these families. Further, the rapid growth that the informal sector in the economy is experiencing, provides succour to street vendors, with particular reference to Street-foods, pursuing of which would need only 'low initial investment' and 'low skills', which is not difficult for them to be equipped with. By keeping a few things in mind, such as hygiene and safety, anyone can enjoy authentic Indian street food.

**Objectives:** The paper unfolds all the facts relating to the Street foods, which is by itself a grand chapter in culinary for centuries, and which retained its status all through in the hospitality industry. The paper also uncovers the facts as to how the Street food business model remained as un-organized sector arm - with the findings of case studies supporting the conclusive observations. Observations also were made about the instances of Street food model of business defying certain of the formal aspects of business for making itself enduring and successful, retaining its special characteristics - cultural, social and economic in nature.

**Methods:** The research study undertaken has been done through exploration of the past data - Research papers, Case Studies and also the other secondary sources of authentic nature. The micro-level study done throws open observations of diverse facts, which have been recorded and sequenced to document the history of Street foods - the past, the present and future.

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**Results:** The research studies of diverse nature on the subject ‘Street Food’ speak about the highly varying operational specifics, however the findings of such careful studies enlighten us on a few points which enable us to understand that the Street-food business model was a naturally born model of food business, surviving right from the ancient past. It is therefore a need based essential and is relevant for all times – the past, present and future. Like home – the living place for people and families, the Street is a God enabled public place which is the common ground for people to go around, meet and acquaint with others, interact and exchange their ideas, opinions, issues and to be supportive in co-existence. The Street has been a showcasing place for people to inform, instruct, influence, entertain, exchange enabling in the earliest days, bartering of commodities, products, services. The practice is still in vogue.

**Conclusions:** The features – Easy availability, low cost and tasty options meeting the needs of those looking for it, make the Street foods to continue to be popular facing all odds that work against it. Street food thus had its origin right from the unknown past and will ever remain in future, if the study findings are to be taken for validation.

**Keywords:** Street foods - Street vendors - Food trucks - Food Carts - Food markets

## INTRODUCTION

The rich history of Street food in India speaks about the traditional culture of the country. Ease of availability, variety of foods, low prices, made the street foods a popular option among all sections of the society, including the upper class and also the International tourists. Street vendors operate using portable booth structures or mini trucks for selling the foods. They are operated by individuals and also by the family members together as a unit.

The business - Street Food business has a share of 20% of the total street vending business in India. The business volume and the people involved in the business either as small business owners or otherwise in this un-organized sector of business are huge, deserving specific attention.



**Courtesy : FSSAI - (Ref: 01)**

**Life-style changes** - Urbanization in the last two decades has changed the lifestyles making people to stay far away from their hometowns. To those who move out their towns and seek to be employed with low or no skill sets for jobs, Street food vending makes available food at affordable costs and there is employment opportunity for the unskilled migrants in to the cities. Street food is adopted as an alternative, considering convenience. There are, of course, hygiene and Safety concerns. However, street food is a crucial need of the people, as it provides affordable meals for customers and employment for those self-employed and entrepreneurial vendors. With growing competition and the trending practices such as Food-Apps, the vendors are evolving to meet the demands of future. (Ref: 02)

**Traditional to Contemporary / Fusion foods** - Street food has become a vital part of urban culture. It provides diverse kinds of foods of ready-to-eat nature sold by the vendors having temporary set ups. It is a reflection of local cuisine, the people's lifestyle, the prevailing economic conditions with affordable options for foods and options for employment. It is reported that there are one crore (ten million) street vendors in India. They sell variety of food items – **fresh produce** to the **cooked dishes** satisfying the tastes of the city dwellers and the migrants from rural & up-country locations. Apart from the limited knowledge on **food safety and hygiene** of some Street food vendors, they also have reduced “access to clean water, sanitation, and waste disposal facility”. The vendors are also exposed to risks - fire safety, air pollution, traffic related issues. Though “Street Vendors Act 2014” does come to the rescue of the vendors, when and where required, there is still lot that this unorganized sector longs for. (Ref: 03). The study also leaves us to believe that in Chennai, the traditional snacks such as Idli, Dosa and others are replaced by the items – panipuri, Channa Samosa, Burmese Atho, due to competition in the market of street food. Yummy and tangy tastes of other cuisine foods captured the market which was ruled by the south Indian dishes. The conventional foods such as Idli & Dosa appealed to needs of food for energy – more as a staple food. Sensory appeals of street foods started winning space for them in the market meeting the needs of the impulsive eaters of young segment. (Ref: 04)

**Size of Business - Street food**, as per FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), is ready-to-eat food and also hot and cold beverages, which are sold to people in public. The business model offers distinct socio-economic benefits of support to small farmers who earn decent earnings by providing inexpensive and nutritious meals, which is a great contribution to the low-income groups of population. Travellers and foodies seeking tasty and flavourful foods of national / regional cuisines, crave for these foods. Reports confirm that around 2.5 billion people around the globe eat street-food daily, which highlights the cultural and the economic importance. For low and middle income groups of people, street foods provide the crucial needs of nutritious foods. The business of Street food is also driven by quick eating needs and to suit busy life-style. (Ref: 05). Street foods are mostly ready-to-eat items, which the vendors sell in the public places housed in temporary structures. Urban economy, as per the Draft National Policy, crucially depends on street vendors with street food vendors contributing significantly in the developing countries, where the rural population has been moving to cities seeking employment. The growing informal sector thus has people either with no / low investment and skills. (Ref: 06). A **daily business turnover of Rs.3000 crores** and **one crore vendors** are the contributions of Street food to the Indian economy and employment, respectively. While the figures are big enough, the sector is unorganized. (Ref: 07). As has been mentioned, Urbanization has been the reason for the surge in street food vending, creating a scope for people who moved out their hometowns to be fed. FAO estimates that in general 30% of the food expenses met out by people are for food bought from outside. The agency - Equity Policy Centre, highlights that Street food business enables mainly women to earn more than minimum-wages in some countries. And Street food vendors are self-employed and self-made entrepreneurs who are able to capitalize their personal strengths and socially relevant networks. The business model is a naturally sprouted arm of the Street food vendors, supporting their livelihoods and reducing the burden on the state. (Ref: 08). Either the Street food vendors lack awareness about the essential need of food safety and practice of hygiene due to their educational and social background or they could be less serious about the needs of food safety and hygiene. It is a major drawback which is actually a stumbling block. The business otherwise would grow at much faster a pace reshaping the food market in a large measure. Lack of knowledge and practice in food safety and hygiene among the handlers of food has been a big risk in spreading food borne ailments and non-communicable diseases. Creation of food standards, guidelines and updates of Codex Alimentarius of FAO & WHO, would address these serious issues. More than the laws being in place, education and implementation of procedures have to be compulsorily in place in order to protect Consumers health by promoting of foods which are healthy and ensuring of robust food preparation methods addressing the common objective of public health issues connected to street food consumption. (Ref: 09)

Street food, due to its agenda that suits all times past, present and future, is a model of Food business having a natural origin. When and where, it all began is difficult pin point and say. And the model, similarly, would exist ever in future, if its strong and continuous existence all through the years, is any indication.

## OBJECTIVES

The paper unfolds all the facts relating to the Street foods, which is by itself a grand chapter in culinary for centuries, and which retained its status all through in the hospitality industry. The paper also uncovers the facts as

to how the Street food business model remained as un-organized sector arm - with the findings of case studies supporting the conclusive observations. Observations also were made about the instances of Street food model of business defying certain of the formal aspects of business for making itself enduring and successful, retaining its special characteristics - cultural, social and economic in nature.

## METHODS

The research study undertaken has been done through exploration of the past data - Research papers, Case Studies and also the other secondary sources of authentic nature. The micro-level study done throws open observations of diverse facts which have been recorded and sequenced to document the history of Street foods - the past, the present and future.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

**Street food originated as a need based product** - Street food came to existence as a natural concept in the unknown past, continued with its presence and grew in size as a major branch of food business. In fact, the measure of street food business could always relate to one with the measure of migrating people (rural or internal) low income groups, knowledge deficient and low skilled, who had to meet their food needs themselves at an affordable cost. The model of business had always had the inherent scope for employment for the low and middle income groups, who found it difficult to meet the ends in life.

**Origin of street food in India** - Indian street food has an enriching history of long past - over centuries. The concept of Street food belongs to the ancient times when traders, travelling people, and the gathering of locals in the bustling busy marketplaces to buy what they want and sell what they had. Markets grew with swelling population, and it became a practice for vendors to temporarily put up food stalls to serve to the needs of the gathering and promenading people there. The street food vendors offered a variety of dishes traditionally popular and easy to prepare, at the same time, delicious, and affordable to the people.

**Evolution of street food over time** - Over a period of time, street food in India got evolved and started adapting to the changing needs and tastes of the people. Different regions and communities met and began to know each other; they brought their own preparations of food varieties belonging to their traditions. Fusion foods resulted accordingly and the flavours changed influenced by other communities' cuisines. Street food business was the major beneficiary out of this whole process of interactions and influences. and the vibrant street food culture that we see today in the country is a result of such a societal change. (Ref: 10)

**Cultural Reflection** - Street food in India is an expression of national & cultural significance of vibrant nature, showcasing the nation's culinary heritage, regional diversity, and societal genre.

**Heritage& Diversity** - Street food in India reflects the country's richness of cultural heritage. Every dish showcased speaks about India's history, long lasting custom, and regionally relevant tastes.

**Influences of fusion** - For centuries, street food has evolved by the working together of the various types of communities and the surrounding regions. The amalgamation of these concepts and methods of preparation have led to dynamic levels of street food culture present currently.

**Equalizer of Social differences** - The Street food in India like any other place bridges social diversity. It is accessible to one and all, notwithstanding the wealth, religion, or other sub-sects, offering a space which is common for enjoyment of varied flavours.

**Spices, Flavours and their uses** - Spices speak about specifics of Indian cuisine, and street food is therefore not different. Use of chillies, spicy aroma and the blends, thereof, excite the palate and results in stirred-up nostalgia.

**Traditional Cooking Techniques** - Street vendors employ age-old cooking techniques inherited across generations. Methods like frying, grilling, and steaming maintain the food's traditional authenticity.

**Economic relevance** - Source of Employment: Street food vendors play a crucial role in the local economy, relying on the sale of tasty and the economical food to the public.

**Entrepreneurship** - Street food outlets operate as small-scale enterprises within lively markets, offering nourishment and jobs.

**Concerns about Health and Hygiene** - Challenges: It can be difficult to uphold hygiene standards in street food preparation due to the nature of outdoor cooking and ingredient handling.

**Ongoing Efforts** - There are efforts addressing the health need to guarantee the safety of street food.

**Tourism & Festivities** - Tourist Attraction: Indian street food draws tourists looking for genuine culinary experiences.

Indian street food is more than a feast for the taste buds; it's a colourful tapestry of culture, a celebration of community, and the very soul of India captured in every bite **((Ref: 11))**

**Needs, wants and the cravings of the palate** - One can understand the needs of people, if the habits and the practices of them are understood, though they belong to demographically diverse groups. Their needs, interests, wants and demands form a clear picture of what they expect, when, where and in what form. All these are defined in the societal set up which help sources of delivering the needs – crude or refined, they may be. Street food initially started to fulfil the needs of food and slowly changed as meeting the wants and the cravings of the palate, though the food for energy and healthy life needs of people always stood as the primary pre-requisite.

**STUDY FINDINGS– 01 – on Choices & demands** - The discussion brought in here as the study findings could unveil information on the choices, demands and other factors that people, who either actively operated the street food business or benefited by the model of business as consumers. The quantitative research study done using random sampling (sample size 50) to know from the street vendors in Chandigarh, seeking answers to the questionnaire on business related information, revealed the following data based information. The data on analysis later under three-point-scale revealed the following feedback the highlights of the study were:

**Feedback on Street-foods – demand, choice, hygiene, cost and other information**

Question	Yes		Maybe		No	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Do you feel the demand for street food is changing amongst the people in Chandigarh?	48%	24	16%	8	36%	18
Do you feel the demand of street foods is decreasing these days due to hygiene and health reasons?	50%	25	10%	5	40%	20
Do you think public prefers street food because of cheap rates?	46%	23	26%	13	28%	14
Is traditional street food is influenced by modern trends?	46%	23	36%	18	18%	9
Are you willing to register yourself on the on line apps?	24%	12	12%	6	64%	32
According to you is the trend of ordering food online is rising?	56%	28	14%	7	30%	15
Do you feel that people hesitate to buy food from new vendors in an area?	24%	12	58%	29	18%	9
Do you think street food is healthy for public?	30%	15	24%	12	46%	23
Are you satisfied by the measures taken by the government for the street food vendors?	15%	7	12%	6	73%	36



Is the street food served by you is clean and prepared in hygienic conditions?	56%	28	22%	11	22%	11
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**Ref: Future of street food in Chandigarh - Gitanshu Kumar – et al**

Do you feel the demand for street food is changing amongst the people in Chandigarh? **Yes - 48%**

Do you think public prefers street food because of cheap rates? **Yes - 46%**

Is traditional street food is influenced by modern trends? **Yes - 46%**

Are you willing to register yourself on the online apps? **No - 64%**

According to you is the trend of ordering food online is rising? **Yes - 56%**

Are you willing to register yourself on the online apps? **Yes - 64%**

Do you think street food is healthy for public? **No - 46%**

Are you satisfied by the measures taken by the government for the street food vendors? **No - 73%**

Is the street food served by you is clean and prepared in hygienic conditions?

**Yes - 56%**

**STUDY FINDINGS– 02** The highlights of responses received reveal that the healthy nature and cost of street foods are moderate. 56% of the respondents positively reacted about preparation of food saying that it has been done in hygienic conditions, leaving a big gap of 44% saying no.

**Attitude of respondents toward reasons for preferring street food (n=120)**

S. No.	Statement/reasons for preference	Strongly agree		Agree		Not Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
1.	For fun or change	30 (50)	28 (46.67)	19 (31.67)	25 (41.67)	9 (15)	6 (10)	2 (3.33)	-	-	1 (1.67)
2.	Enthusiasm to try out new dishes	10 (16.67)	18 (30)	43 (71.67)	36 (60)	7 (11.67)	5 (8.33)	-	1 (1.67)	-	-
3.	For taste	17 (28.33)	24 (40)	22 (36.67)	25 (41.67)	19 (31.67)	11 (18.33)	1 (1.67)	-	1 (1.67)	-
4.	Depends on mood	18 (30)	19 (31.67)	25 (41.67)	33 (55)	7 (11.67)	2 (3.33)	10 (16.67)	6 (10)	-	-
5.	Less price	15 (25)	14 (23.33)	20 (33.33)	27 (45)	15 (25)	13 (21.67)	2 (3.33)	-	8 (13.33)	6 (10)
6.	For easy convenience	11 (18.33)	16 (26.67)	30 (50)	31 (51.67)	8 (13.33)	7 (11.67)	9 (15)	5 (8.33)	2 (3.33)	1 (1.67)
7.	To remove stress	11 (18.33)	14 (23.33)	20 (33.33)	24 (40)	18 (30)	19 (31.67)	9 (15)	2 (3.33)	2 (3.33)	1 (1.67)
8.	To remove loneliness	12 (20)	8 (13.33)	22 (36.67)	21 (35)	16 (26.67)	26 (43.33)	7 (11.67)	3 (5)	3 (5)	2 (3.33)
9.	For time-saving	17 (28.33)	21 (35)	26 (43.33)	19 (31.67)	10 (16.67)	12 (20)	6 (10)	8 (13.33)	1 (1.67)	-
10.	Menu items	11 (18.33)	13 (21.67)	25 (41.67)	29 (48.33)	15 (25)	13 (21.67)	6 (10)	3 (5)	3 (5)	2 (3.33)

11.	<b>Pear group</b>	11 (18.33)	18 (30)	27 (45)	27 (45)	17 (28.33)	13 (21.67)	3 (5)	2 (3.33)	2 (3.33)	-
12.	<b>Less time consuming</b>	12 (20)	16 (26.67)	28 (46.67)	23 (38.33)	12 (20)	13 (21.67)	6 (10)	6 (10)	2 (3.33)	2 (3.33)

### Ref: Future of street food in Chandigarh - Gitanshu Kumar – et al

#### Attitude of the boys and girls toward the habit of consuming street food

The study reveals that 81% of the boys and 88.3% of girls consume street food for fun/change. 88.3% of the boys and 90% of girls consumed as they are enthusiastic to try out new dishes; 65% of the boys and 81.6% of girls consumed for the taste, 63.3% of the boys and 75% of girls opted for street food because of the peer member group. (Sumaiya *et al.* (2020)

The high lights among the factors are 'mood, low price, easy and convenience, stress driven, being alone, easy availability, etc. These are the factors influencing them to go for street food. The other reasons mentioned were - eating when bored (60%), during depression (18%), and when in worry (22%). Wara and Binata (2021) (Ref.12) reported that 56.9% chose street food for the accessibility. Only 13.8% chose since it is excellent cuisine.

#### Knowledge of the respondents regarding food safety and hygiene (n=120)

S. No.	Statements/knowledge about food safety	Feedback	Boys n=60		Total	Girls n=60		Total
			D Boys n=30	H Boys n=30		D Girls n=30	H Girls n=30	
1.	<b>Preparation of street food with proper safety</b>							
		Yes	20 (66.67)	21 (70)	41 (68.33)	21 (70)	19 (63.33)	40 (66.67)
		No	10 (33.33)	9 (30)	19 (31.67)	9 (30)	11 (36.67)	20 (33.33)
2.	<b>Foodborne illness</b>	Yes	20 (66.67)	12 (40)	32 (53.33)	22 (73.33)	19 (63.33)	41 (68.33)
		No	10 (33.33)	18 (60)	28 (46.67)	8 (26.67)	11 (36.67)	19 (31.67)
3.	<b>Hygiene</b>	Yes	25 (83.33)	27 (90)	52 (86.66)	30 (100)	26 (86.67)	56 (93.33)
		No	5 (16.67)	3 (10)	8 (13.33)	-	4 (13.33)	4 (6.67)
4.	<b>Food contamination</b>	Yes	18 (60)	19 (63.33)	37 (61.67)	23 (76.67)	19 (63.33)	42 (70)
		No	12 (40)	11 (36.67)	23 (38.33)	7 (23.33)	11 (36.67)	18 (30)
5.	<b>Water contamination</b>	Yes	17 (56.67)	19 (63.33)	36 (60)	24 (80)	22 (73.33)	46 (76.67)
		No	13 (43.33)	11 (36.67)	24 (40)	6 (20)	8 (26.67)	8 (13.33)
		Yes	20	17	37	22	23	45

<b>6.</b>	<b>Awareness about these mentioned food laws</b>	<b>FSSAI</b>		(66.67)	(56.67)	(61.67)	(73.33)	(76.67)	(75)
			No	10 (33.33)	13 (43.33)	23 (38.33)	8 (26.67)	7 (23.33)	15 (25)
		<b>FDA</b>	Yes	15 (50)	17 (56.67)	32 (53.33)	20 (66.67)	16 (53.33)	36 (60)
			No	15 (50)	13 (43.33)	28 (46.67)	10 (33.33)	14 (46.67)	24 (40)
		<b>HACCP</b>	Yes	19 (63.33)	17 (56.67)	36 (60)	14 (46.67)	20 (66.67)	34 (56.67)
			No	11 (36.67)	13 (43.33)	24 (40)	16 (53.33)	10 (33.33)	26 (43.33)

**Knowledge regarding food safety and hygiene** - The findings of the study as tabulated above reveal that 86.6% and 93.3% of college going boys and the girls, respectively, have adequate knowledge about food hygiene. Also 61.6% boys and 70% girls, and 60% boys and 76.6% girls, respectively, were having knowledge about food-contamination & water contamination, respectively. The study thus revealed that almost all the respondents were aware of the symptoms of food poisoning. It was also a revelation that 61.6% of boys and 75% of girls were knowing food laws – FSSAI & FDS. As per- Wara and Binata (2021) - most of the consumers were having awareness about the food-borne illnesses. Yan et al. (2019)

**STUDY FINDINGS– 03 - Street food vendors** - Another brief study on 30 Street food vendors revealed that 24 of the vendors were male and 6 of them were female – meaning **80% of the street vendors were male and only 20% female**. And the other classification found real as per sample was **23% of the street vendors were mobile and 77% of the vendors were permanent**.

**STUDY FINDINGS– 04 “Full time & part time” & “Earnings and Savings”** - Study on the Street food vendors in the town of Tiruvannamalai size – a temple town, reveals that the street food vending offers a viable employment possibility for economically poor group of people and it provides food access for the lower middle class and the low-income working group of people. The respondents in the study were 60% male and 63% Hindu community. 52% of the respondents' initial investment was Rs.1000 – 5000. A majority of the respondents – 64% could save 5001 – 10000 per month. Location of the business - 44.8% carried on their business in an undesignated natural market. 47% of the vendors worked part time. (Dr. R. Sridharan et al).

#### **Formalization of Street food business**

Is formalizing the Street food business totally the right decision - While logically looking at the business of Street foods, there will always be an outlook for anybody to think of formalizing or bringing the Street foods business into the Organized business platform, one has to consider whether formalizing the Street food business totally is better OR setting certain guidelines or strictures addressing essential factors would be better.

Before getting into suggesting of anything, it would be better to look at the pros & cons of formalizing the business practices keeping only the essential corrections needed for incorporating them, as the factors involved are not only concerning the people's health and economy, but also the social and cultural factors, which need to be essentially considered for having view on redressal. Before getting into critical observations on the 'formalizing street food business', it would do good to consider a few suggestive reports.

**STUDY FINDINGS– 05 - The case studies below provide a truly ideal direction for getting into the formalizing process in regard to Street foods:**

**Street food Vendor autonomy & Govt. Regulation in Hanoi City of Vietnam**- The study conducted in Hanoi's Old quarter in the year 1986 had a meaningful relevance even now – It was done to investigate the role



played by street vendors. It is relevant to know that Vietnam shifted to market based economy in the same year. There was incidence of internal migration within the country and thus informal workforce level expanded. Street vending was a significant part of the expanded informal workforce. Street vending that time constituted 11% of the total informal employment in Vietnam and it was 26% in Hanoi. The vendors generally lacked skills and education and hence could not fulfil the needs of formal jobs. "Hanoi's street food culture, vital to its economy, attracts city administration and health officials' attention, especially in the historic, congested Old Quarter. This area's tourism appeal and dense population heighten the focus on street vending management, regulation, and promotion."

The study explored the vendors' perceptions on the policies of regulation on the vending areas, licensing and food safety. The study was done as a team of 10 street vendors, 6 policy makers and a few researchers. **The findings of the study could reveal that there is a "necessity of balancing vendor autonomy with government regulation policies"** – which primarily was to address key issues about – Vendors' lives, agreement between the vendors and the policy makers on their individual societal roles, and the future probable policy approaches. The study touches the points of subtle areas of debate - vendors' experiences and their economic and cultural significance in Hanoi. (Ref: 13)

**STUDY FINDINGS– 06 - Financial support, knowledge development and the online platform for payment system.** - Thailand Government Savings bank as per the policy drawn out 'Street Food Program' under which it supports the Street Food Vendors offering loans extending **financial support, knowledge development** and the **online platform for payment system**. The whole offer of support was extended from the year 2017 to 2019. An astounding number of **19918** Street food vendors utilized the support services, who represent **19.3%** of nationwide SFVs. The program is reported to have benefitted young, educated and vendors of ambitious goals by making them move to formal business platforms. SFP thus enabled social inclusion, self-esteem of the SFVs and their quality of lives. (Ref: 14)

**CASE STUDY - The Un-expected Outcomes** in "Formalizing Street Vendors in Vending Zones - Ms. Ana Maria Vargas - In her paper on the study "Formalizing Street Vendors in Vending Zones - The Un-expected Outcomes", Ms. Ana Maria Vargas, narrates about the poor street vendor – the narrative which provides useful insights for the study on Street food - is as follows:

#### **Informal stage of Ms. Flor's business –**

- A woman named Ms. Flor was working as street vendor, "selling aromatic water, a kind of tea made from the infusion of different herbs and fruits".
- She has no pension since she always had to work informally. Instead, she hoped to continue working as a street vendor, as far as possible.
- She used to start her day in the morning when she went to the 'farmers market' and bought some herbs and fruits - equivalent to three dollars.
- She used to go straight from the market to the vending zone where she had her place to work
- Inside the tent she had, a small stove, a large pot and a table and some chairs to make the costumers to sit.
- She charged one quarter of US\$ for a cup of tea, and from the sales that she did, she made around ten dollars a day as her income

#### **Formalization stage**

- Ms. Flor had worked vending the tea that she prepared in front of a hospital for around 10 years, but about four years ago she was able to formalize her business and enter the vending zone earmarked for the vendors, located few meters away.
- She was happy to work in the vending zones because as she had a roof which protected her from the sun and the rain'.

#### **The repercussions and the worries of formalization**

- There were rumours that the government was upset since the vendors for not following the process of formalization in all respects.

- She thought the government could come back to take away the tents anytime since the government failed to achieve the goals of formalization.
- Ms. Flor did not understand the entire philosophy of the goals of formalization. She's better off in the vending zone, but the government chose to get rid of the vendors, altogether, taking away the tents.
- Working as a street vendor was only a way for Ms. Flor to help herself to 'bring food to the table'.
- She was worried about the dismantling the tents by the government because vendors were not able to follow the formalization process.

### Observations

- It was wondered about the outcomes of formalization and why vendors and policy makers had different expectations about the process of formalization.
- Question therefore arose whether and how street vendors could improve the working conditions after the implementation of formalization in the vending areas.
- Generally in every city of the world, street vendors face wrath, exclusion, poverty and harsh working conditions due to laws that consider the business activities as highly objectionable and a criminal offence. (Austin, 1993; Bromley, 2000; Crossa, 2009).
- Street vendors as a sector contribute to the economy and constitute as an emerging segment leading to poverty reduction staying at the bottom of the economic pyramid, but they work always lacking legal status.
- Primarily, the Street Vendors are considered as pre-modern, a nuisance and a source of congestion (Meneses-Reyes, 2013).

**(Ref: 15)**

### Conclusive findings of the Case study

Formalization though considered as a means to gain legal status to develop business, the end result is not as expected. The process and the policies are found to be criticized by different studies (Centeno and Portes, 2006; Donovan, 2008; Faundez, 2009; Pena, 2000). The study's one point of view is, "formalizing is seen as a way to recover public space and many vendors do not see major benefits from being cover by the rule of law" (Pena, 2000). **Many vendors go back to the streets after formalization despite government efforts (Donovan, 2008). (Ref: 16)**

Gap between 'what the formalization policies are trying to address and what the needs of the street vendors' are:

**It is the assertion of this study that there is a gap between what the formalization policies are trying to address and what the needs of the street vendors are.** While vendors' view is that formalization provides the place for business to conduct their businesses without police actions and evictions, for the government officials, formalization is a way and method to remove the vendors from the locations of the streets.

**It is argued that the need to consider larger objectives of Social and cultural in nature, should be also central and not the outcomes for only economic improvement.** The Nobel Laureate, Dr. Amartya Sen underscores particularly the human development approach to achieve the social outcomes.

The findings of the most influential study done by the Peruvian Economist Hernando De Soto illustrated how street vendors in Lima worked under the national's legal system and had difficulties to expand the business and achieve growth (De Soto, 2000)(**Ref: 17**)

**Formalization is criticized looking at the entrepreneurial side. From a study on re-location in Bogotá, Colombia, it was illustrated about the number of street vendors who abandoned the re-location programs after experiencing a considerable decrease in their sales.**

In several cases, formalization is opted for getting rid of the vendors and recover control over public space, as could be seen in the cases of Zambia (Hansen, 2010), (**Ref: 18**) Malawi (Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2009), **Ref: 19** Ecuador

(Ferragut and Gómez, 2013), and Mexico(Meneses-Reyes, 2013). **Ref: 20** Formalization, many a time, is not clear, whether it could positively influence the street vendors' lives.

Formalization and the efforts to bring the street vending / street food business in to formal economy has been there all over the world. But the efforts have not been totally successful and the continuance of Street food business and the flourishing of the model of business is a classic example. The situations had not changed though times changed. **Street vending and Street food vending, hence is not a disappearing phenomenon. Research Studies and findings corroborate the facts. The transformation in Street food business has been only on how it is done, how the foods changed based on the people's choices.**

**STUDY NO. 07 - The Study of the work “Informal yet Disciplined? Thai government policies on street food vendors of Yoawarat Road, Bangkok, by Suthida Chawla (Thailand), (Ref.21) reveals the fact how the Street Food business sustained because of purposeful retaining of Informality of Street Foods and the vending.**

The Informal Economy is around a quarter (28%) of the employment in general in Bangkok. (NSO 2016) **(Ref.22)**. Of that percentage, people informally employed are 20,000 – 27,000 of vendors, and again of that number 49% are engaged in selling food. (Nirathron 2006) **(Ref.23)**. Street food vendors stood as a pillar of economy of Bangkok and they are the main actors, who have the habit of eating in public - a well accepted one across the strata of economy there (Nirathron 2006; Yasmeen 2000) **(Ref.24)**. In 1993, the share of street food in Bangkok was 50% of the energy intake of adults (less than 40 years) and nearly 90% of the energy intake of the children (of the age 4 to six 6). Its prevalence is on account of two reasons - rural-urban migration and a culture of public eating. Primarily, street vending has ever been a survival approach of immigrants, starting with Chinese immigrants. Farmers in Thai saw the success and had taken up vending of food for making cash turnover faster with low capital / investment. (Nirathron 2006) **(Ref.23)** Secondly, the public eating is a tradition and culture; it is also very common to see friends and family meeting to engage in public eating, which is very much a social activity. (Yasmeen 2000) **(Ref.24)**

The junta (military ruling the country) took measures to ‘organize’ tourist areas, as street food has been recognized primarily as Bangkok’s tourist attraction. CNN awarded Bangkok as the best city in the entire world – for two years consistently. (CNN 2017) **(Ref.25)** This is closely aligned with the state’s approach and strategy for the economic recovery through backing up to strengthen the service sector - mainly tourism and others.

The government decided and organised to have a walking lane especially for pedestrians. The image shows the bustling crowd in the YR (Yoawarat Road) location. The space is divided into Foucault’s ‘useful spaces’, (Hannah 1997:171) each of the sites has been earmarked for specific function – for vending, waking and a road for the transport. The supervision also became effective with high transparency in place.

Tourists are much attracted to YR for the variety and taste of food offered, apart from being a good spot for dinner – a cool location for the friends and colleagues. Tourists from East and West tourists could be seen coming to YR for the place, nice ambience with the popular street dining where a variety of locally made dishes of regional cuisines were offered . Tourists from west too get attracted to the vendors preparing food; the A Spanish couple seemed to have said “I know the food is freshly made because I can see my dish being cooked.”

This is an ample evidence for government control over vending line and the space, which has not been formalized to retain the ‘traditional’ aspects of street dining.



### **THE UNIQUENESS OF STREET FOOD BUSINESS MODEL**

The core part of the business model and the very term **Street-food** makes us recall its ‘easy availability’, ‘low cost’ and ‘food of local cuisine that has cultural and regional connotations’ and many times **nutritious too**. The other logical feeling would be that the food could, in all probability, be less safe and falling

short of hygiene needs. Here, one could also be led to believe that ease of availability and low cost meant less safe and poor-hygiene food. However the popularity and the long centuries of existence made the Street food attain a more refined state, though there is still a risk of the food being non-hygienic and unsafe. People – especially the migrants from rural & up-country locations and the ‘inside the town-migrants’ in general and children and the growing young, in particular, take pleasure in eating the tasty foods – snacks, lip smacking and tangy foods of their choice. The snacks, breads chats and the fusion foods apart from the north Indian foods Channa samosa and the snacks (other international cuisines in the countries overseas) are the sought after street foods. There has been therefore a continuously growing demand, which has never dipped, as the population has also been growing with migration happening in larger numbers. Street food and its popularity has not come down, and contrarily the demand went up. The street food vendors finding the growing demand started differentiating their foods with increased attention on the taste and quality factors that gave them customers acceptance and acknowledgement.

“Urbanisation and street food go hand in hand. Historically, in places such as ancient Rome, street food was purchased because urban poor did not have kitchens in their homes. Across the globe, street food, sometimes also synonymous with fast food, has become an important part of daily life as local population increasingly struggle to keep pace with their hectic lifestyles”

As the studies indicate that the roots of street food would take us into history. Small fried fish were sold in Greece in the ancient times. The poor of urban residents in Rome, where the homes did not have hearths, resorted to buying street food and consumed. Ancient China also was found to have street foods sold and the poor bought and ate, and even the wealthy people also sent their servants to fetch street foods. Ancient India too did not have a different story – as street vending culture could be found even in the Puraanaas. The street vendors offered fresh food which was quite filling and a total value for the money. Street food was junk food, snacks, fast food, etc. All these varieties of food were offered on a push cart or a mobile vehicle.

As per a study report released in the year 2012, around 2.5 billion people ate street food in India each day. The National Street Food Festival, organised in Delhi by the National Association of Street Food Vendors of India is a platform in which street food vendors from across all the states in the country showcased the street food varieties – exhibiting the diverse cultural practices in the country.

According to Australian Culinary Historian and an author of his book ‘Penguin Food guide to India, O’Brien felt Indian food was most complex in nature – and “it’s with history, culture, religion, economic conditions and also weather” Street food thus had its reflection in the menus that the street vendors had to offer. (Ref: 26)

## CONCLUSIONS

The research studies of diverse nature on the subject ‘Street Food’ speak about the highly varying operational specifics, however the findings of such careful studies enlighten us on a few points which enable us to understand that the Street-food business model was a naturally born model of food business, surviving right from the ancient past. It is therefore a need based essential and is relevant for all times – the past, present and future. Like home – the living place for people and families, the Street is a God enabled public place which is the common ground for people to go around, meet and acquaint with others, interact and exchange their ideas, opinions, issues and to be supportive in co-existence. The Street has been a showcasing place for people to inform, instruct, influence, entertain, exchange enabling in the earliest days, bartering of commodities, products, services. The practice is still in vogue. For making larger audience – the prospective buyers, to inform & influence, the manufacturers / producers brought their products and services to the Street/Road, and showcased them for others to know what they could offer and deliver. Street vending concept originated like that and Street-food has been a branch of Street vending from time immemorial. Vendors went around the streets to sell their agricultural produce, manufacturers displayed their products alongside the streets / pavements, artisans -offering Services, gathered in one place offering their services, where the needy came in search to connect with them. Similarly, the entertainers set their stages for enthusing the crowds. Cinema theatres (the moving theatres of the past), Circus grounds, exhibitions and melas thus became a reality. Moving vendors even used the mikes and speakers to announce what they had to offer. Marketers did sales campaigns and the Politicians did their election campaigns. And for all of them the Street has been the common place of connecting to meet, interact and exchange. Street food took its position as early as the ancient times, serving the life sustaining need. Kitchens and cooking, of course, existed always, but the people who are out on travel, non-residents and those who have no possibilities to cook, naturally depended on the

food vendors, who have their space on the Street. They put up covered structures – temporary or permanent; they also had moving carts for their food vending avocation. The situations had not changed though times changed. ‘Street vending and Street food vending’, hence is not a disappearing phenomenon. Research Studies and findings corroborate the facts. The transformation in Street food business has been only on how it is done, how the foods changed based on the people’s choices. Fast transformations happening on the food varieties, cuisines with highly tasty and tangy food options only became the changes. Food Safety and hygiene did receive attention, of course. Street foods offered today are diverse in variety, tasty, matching the expectations of people who depend/ patronise the street foods. While the food varieties changed with new cuisines, fusion foods, snacks, chats and other fast foods, the concept of Street Food, has not changed. Formalization, modernization and professionalism have been working on the Street foods to bring the desired changes, but the model of Street Food business remained ever vibrant growing from strength to strength. **The features – Easy availability, low cost and tasty options meeting the needs of those looking for it, make the Street foods to continue to be popular facing all odds that work against it. Street food thus had its origin right from the unknown past and will ever remain in future, if the study findings are to be taken for validation.**

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