



A STUDY ON CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS AND SATISFACTION WITH FOOD HYGIENE PRACTICES AND HYGIENE TRAINING IN THE FAST FOOD SECTOR

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Abstract:

As the worldwide fast-food industry expands due to urbanization and customer demand for convenience, food safety remains a critical element in determining both public health and business sustainability. Legislative frameworks regulate hygienic norms, yet subjective "perceived hygiene" rather than objective laboratory safety often determines client patronage. An analysis of consumer food safety perceptions suggests that visible hygiene indicators, such as clean staff attire and tidy, transparent preparation areas, heavily influence customer trust, often outweighing actual knowledge of food safety. Data interpretation typically reveals a tradeoff where consumers accept lower hygienic standards at street vendors in exchange for affordability. Recommendations to improve satisfaction include implementing mandatory, standardized training for vendors, adopting digital hygiene rating systems, and upgrading infrastructure to ensure access to clean water. This study collects data from consumers using a quantitative cross-sectional survey design in order to assess how visual hygiene cues, such as staff clothing, cleanliness of the premises, and food handling methods, affect overall customer happiness. According to preliminary expectations, informal stalls maintain high satisfaction through transparency and price point despite lower perceived sanitary rigor, while organized chains are viewed as safer due to consistent branding. The research's conclusions will give stakeholders, such as food sellers and public health officials, practical advice on how to match operational hygiene with customer expectations. In the end, the study adds to the body of knowledge by measuring the relationship between sanitary trust and customer retention, providing a road map for enhancing safety communication in a food industry that is becoming more and more competitive.

Key word: *Food Hygiene, Consumer Perception, Customer Satisfaction, Fast Food Sector, Food Safety Standards, Street Food Vendors, Public Health, Sanitary Practices, Service Quality*

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Introduction:

1. An overview of the Fast Food Sector:

Convenience, affordability, and an increasing need for quick meal options have all contributed to the fast food industry's explosive global rise. Fast food

vendors and kiosks, which serve a diverse clientele, are becoming an essential component of metropolitan environments. But because of this expansion, it is now more important than ever to handle food safety and sanitary procedures.



2. **Research Goals:** This paper's main objective is to find out how customers feel about the hygienic standards at fast food restaurants and how well employee hygiene training works. Vendors can enhance their offerings and conform to health regulations by comprehending customer perspectives.
3. **Importance of Research:** The study's findings may offer fast food vendors useful information to improve consumer satisfaction, hygienic procedures, and adherence to food safety laws. It might also help public health organizations make policy suggestions about how to enforce hygienic standards in the food service industry.
4. **Statement of the Problem:** Fast food's price and convenience have made it a mainstay of contemporary metropolitan diets. However, the business is often beset by uneven adherence to food safety regulations, which increases the hazards to public health. Although authorities control technical hygiene standards, there is still much to learn about how consumers' views of these practices—which are sometimes dependent on visible cues rather than actual data—affect their general pleasure and likelihood of returning. The industry has a "trust deficit" that jeopardizes both corporate sustainability and public health results if vendor behaviors are not in line with customer expectations. By contrasting how various fast-food sector groups are viewed and how those views influence consumer behavior, this study aims to close this gap.

Literature Review:

1. **Food Service Hygiene Standards:** Numerous studies have recognized the significance of hygiene in food service. Poor hygiene habits and incorrect food handling are frequently associated with foodborne infections, which can pose serious health concerns (Michaud, 2017; Hussain et al., 2018). In

order to reduce these hazards, international organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) stress the significance of cleanliness standards.

2. **Consumer Views and Hygiene Trust:** Consumers are growing more aware of hygienic standards when dining out, according to studies. Customers' trust and loyalty to a restaurant can be impacted by a positive opinion of hygiene (Moreno, 2019). It is often known that clean facilities, well-maintained employee clothing, and customer happiness are all correlated (Smith & Clark, 2020).
3. **Food Handlers' Hygiene Training:** Maintaining excellent hygiene standards requires food handlers to have proper hygiene training. Food vendors that put in place thorough hygiene training programs are better able to stop food contamination and lower the likelihood of outbreaks, according to research by Brown and Smith (2020). Handwashing, preventing cross-contamination, and equipment cleaning are just a few of the topics covered in training.
4. **Knowledge Gap:** Fewer studies concentrate on small-scale fast food vendors and stalls, despite the fact that a lot has been written on cleanliness standards in large-scale restaurants and fast food franchises. By focusing on hygienic standards and training in this frequently disregarded industry, this article seeks to close this gap.

Methodology:

Research Design: Type: Mixed Methods, a qualitative and quantitative method. descriptive and survey research.

Respondents: Consumers from Vasai-virar regions took part.

Tools: Questionnaire through google form for surveys.

Data collection:

Primary Data: Consumer questionnaires about food hygiene satisfaction and perception, analysed by



Percentage.

Secondary Data: Research Articles, Business Journals, FSSAI safety standards report,

In order to properly design these, we must draw attention to the conflict between the industry's frequently inconsistent hygienic standards and the rising demand for fast food.

Research Objectives:

1. To assess how well-informed customers are about common food hygiene procedures in different fast-food settings.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

1.Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Under 20	50	80.6
21-30	3	4.8
31-40	1	1.6
41-50	8	12.9
51-60	0	0

Young consumers make up the largest sector of fast-food patrons in this study, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of respondents (80.6%) are under 20. Only 12.9% of respondents are between the ages of 41 and 50.

2.Gender-wise Distribution

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	15	24.2%
Female	47	75.8%
Total	62	100%

This suggests that female customers were more involved in the study and may be more conscious of or concerned about the cleanliness and food hygiene standards in fast food restaurants.

3. Frequency of Visiting Fast Food Stalls

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	6	9.7%
2–3 times a week	24	38.7%
Once a week	15	24.2%
2–3 times a month	5	8.1%
Rarely	11	17.7%
Never	1	1.6%
Total	62	100%

This suggests that respondents frequently eat fast food. Maintaining appropriate food hygiene procedures, such as clean preparation spaces, hygienic packaging, and safe food handling, becomes crucial for customer satisfaction because customers frequently contact these outlets.



4. Preferred Setting for Consuming Fast Food

Place	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Inside Restaurant(Dine in)	35	56.5%
Takeaway	19	30.6%
Delivery	8	12.9%
Total	62	100%

This demonstrates how important sanitary kitchens, spotless dining areas, and obvious sanitation procedures are in influencing how customers view and feel about fast food restaurants.

5. Rating of Cleanliness of Fast Food Stalls

Cleanliness Rating	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very Clean	6	9.7%
Clean	17	27.4%
Average	38	61.3%
Dirty	1	1.6%
Very Dirty	0	0%
Total	62	100%

This suggests that even if fast food establishments uphold a moderate quality of sanitation, there is still opportunity for development to raise customer satisfaction with cleanliness requirements.

6. Factors Influencing Consumer Perception of Hygiene

Factors	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Cleanliness of food preparation areas	52	83.9%
Cleanliness of dining area	36	58.1%
Appearance of food handlers	29	46.8%
Presence of protective equipment	27	43.5%
Availability of sanitation stations	23	37.1%
Other factors	5	8.1%

This demonstrates that while assessing food safety in fast food restaurants, customers pay particular attention to obvious hygienic standards.

7. Importance of Hygiene When Choosing Fast Food Stalls

Opinion	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, very important	57	91.9%
Somewhat important	4	6.5%
Not important at all	1	1.6%
Total	62	100%

This demonstrates unequivocally that consumer perception and happiness in the fast food industry are greatly influenced by food cleanliness practices.



8. Avoidance of Fast Food Stalls Due to Poor Hygiene

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	54	87.1%
No	8	12.9%
Total	62	100%

This suggests that consumer decisions and trust in the fast food industry are significantly influenced by hygiene.

9. Consumer Reaction When Staff Do Not Follow Hygiene Protocols

Reaction	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very concerned	37	59.7%
Somewhat concerned	9	14.5%
Neutral	11	17.7%
Not concerned	5	8.1%
Total	62	100%

This implies that most customers expect fast food employees to follow stringent hygienic procedures, and any carelessness has a detrimental impact on their opinion and level of satisfaction.

10. Likelihood of Revisiting Fast Food Stalls with High Hygiene Standards

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, definitely	52	83.9%
Yes, somewhat	6	9.7%
No, not at all	4	6.4%
Total	62	100%

This makes it abundantly evident that upholding good cleanliness standards can boost patron happiness, loyalty, and return business in the fast food industry.

11. Most Important Hygiene Practices that Food Handlers Should Follow

Hygiene Practice	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Keeping food preparation area clean	54	87.1%
Washing hands regularly	51	82.3%
Wearing gloves while handling food	48	74.2%
Wearing clean uniforms and protective gear	19	30.6%
Avoiding cross-contamination between foods	15	24.2%
Ensuring food is stored at correct temperature	12	19.4%
Using sanitizers and disinfectants	11	17.7%
Other	0	0%

The results demonstrate that customers place a high value on obvious and fundamental hygiene practices, like keeping the preparation area clean and washing their hands properly. These actions are readily apparent and have a direct impact on consumers' trust in food safety. However, lower responses were given to technically crucial food safety procedures like temperature control and cross-contamination prevention, suggesting that consumers are not well-informed on advanced food hygiene standards.



12. Importance of Regular Hygiene Training for Fast Food Stall Workers

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	39	62.9%
Important	18	29.0%
Neutral	5	8.1%
Not Important	0	0%
Not Sure	0	0%
Total	62	100%

This outcome makes it very evident that consumers understand the importance of food handlers receiving cleanliness training. Consumer awareness of the role of trained personnel in upholding food safety and hygiene requirements is shown in the high percentage of responses highlighting its significance. Therefore, regular cleanliness training can improve customer satisfaction and trust in fast food businesses.

13. Confidence in Hygiene Standards with Visible Training Certifications

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	36	58.1%
Maybe	20	32.3%
No	6	9.6%
Total	62	100%

According to this research, consumer confidence is greatly impacted by openness and obvious evidence of hygiene instruction. Customers can be reassured that staff members are informed about food safety procedures by displaying hygiene certificates or training credentials. Therefore, by publicly displaying hygiene training certifications and compliance information, fast food establishments can increase customer trust.

14. Knowledge and Awareness of Hygiene Training of Employees

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	22	35.5%
No	18	29%
Not Sure	22	35.5%
Total	62	100%

The results show that customers are not well-informed on employee hygiene training. The same proportion of "Yes" and "Not sure" answers suggests that many customers are unaware of the fast food industry's training procedures. This implies that in order to boost consumer trust and knowledge, fast food companies should be more transparent by showcasing hygiene certifications, training certificates, or hygiene rules.

15. Opinion on Legal Requirement of Hygiene Training for Fast Food Employees

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, definitely	51	82.3%
Yes, somewhat	9	14.5%
No, not at all	1	1.6%
Not Sure	1	1.6%
Total	62	100%

The findings unequivocally show that consumers strongly support government rules pertaining to hygiene education in the fast food industry. In order to guarantee food safety, consumers need food vendors to adhere to appropriate hygiene standards. Therefore, making cleanliness training necessary can greatly increase customer happiness and trust in fast food businesses.



Overall Findings

1. As important hygiene measures, consumers place a high value on gloves, hand hygiene, and clean food preparation spaces.
2. The vast majority of respondents think that maintaining food safety requires frequent hygiene training for food handlers.
3. When hygiene training qualifications are prominently displayed, customers are more confident in fast food establishments.
4. Since many respondents only occasionally trust hygiene practices, consumer trust in them is modest but not absolute.
5. Customers are not well-informed on employee hygiene training.
6. Although nearly half of the respondents had observed hygienic standards, many fast food shops continue to exhibit inconsistent practices.
7. Customers are overwhelmingly in favor of laws mandating fast food workers to receive hygiene training.
8. Clean food preparation rooms and hand washing are examples of visible hygiene procedures that greatly boost customer confidence.
9. Positive consumer impressions of food cleanliness are greatly influenced by protective apparel such as aprons and gloves.
10. Consumer trust is further strengthened by regular inspections by health authorities and transparency in hygiene standards.

Recommendations:

1. Make sure the water used for drinking, cooking, and washing is safe and clean.
2. To reduce direct contact with food, vendors should wear aprons, hairnets, and gloves.
3. To make sure they are fit to handle food, vendors should have regular medical examinations.
4. To gain the trust of customers, clearly display cleaning schedules or hygiene certificates.

5. To maintain a hygienic environment, provide closed trash cans for waste disposal.
6. To stop bacterial growth, keep hot foods hot and cold items suitably chilled.
7. Make food preparation visible to patrons in a spotless, well-organized area.
8. To continuously improve procedures, solicit input on safety and cleanliness.

Conclusion:

The findings of the study indicate that consumers are highly concerned about food hygiene standards in the fast food sector. Most respondents expect fast food vendors to provide proper hygiene training, maintain visible cleanliness, and follow strict food safety practices. Implementing these measures can improve consumer satisfaction, trust, and overall perception of food safety in the fast food industry.

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