

Consumers Preference towards Roadside Eateries in Madurai City

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Abstract

This research investigates into the vibrant urban food-scape of Madurai, where roadside eateries serve not just as food outlets but also as reflections of the socio-economic conditions prevalent in the area. These eateries attract a broad spectrum of patrons, characterized by a significant female majority and a predominantly young, educated demographic from various religious backgrounds. The study highlights the key influences on consumer choices, such as affordability, convenience, and cultural preferences, which are pivotal in understanding the dynamics of street food consumption in a culturally rich and economically diverse city like Madurai. The findings offer insights into how these eateries cater to and are shaped by the urban population, providing stakeholders valuable data to tailor their services effectively to meet the evolving tastes and preferences of their consumers.

Key words: Consumer Preferences, Roadside Eateries, Madurai City and Demographic Analysis

Introduction

In the busy city of Madurai, roadside eateries represent a vibrant and integral part of the urban food-scape. These establishments, ranging from makeshift stalls to well-established carts, not only cater to the culinary tastes of diverse populations but also reflect the socio-economic fabric of the region. This study aims to investigate into the consumer preferences towards these roadside eateries, seeking to understand the factors that influence patronage and the demographics of their clientele. Madurai, known for its rich cultural heritage and as a hub of economic activities in Tamil Nadu, offers a unique setting to explore the dynamics of street food consumption. The city's streets are lined with vendors offering a plethora of eating options that are quick, affordable, and appealing to the palate of the local and visiting population.

Profile of Consumers of Roadside Eateries in Madurai City

To better understand the consumer base of roadside eateries in Madurai, a detailed survey was conducted encompassing a wide array of demographic variables. This survey aimed to gather insightful data on the respondents' backgrounds, including their gender, religious affiliation, age group, educational level, place of dwelling, marital status, family type, and monthly income. The forthcoming analysis provides a breakdown of these variables, offering a comprehensive snapshot of the typical patron profile at these eateries.

The Table No. 1 presents the collected data in a structured format, highlighting the diversity and characteristics of the respondents.

Table No. 1
Profile of Consumers of Roadside Eateries in Madurai City

Category	Sub-category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	167	41.6
	Female	234	58.4
Religion	Hindu	208	51.9
	Christian	172	42.9
	Islam	3	0.7
	Jain	3	0.7
	Atheist	15	3.7
	Age Group	Below 20 years	137
	20 - 34 years	169	42.1
	35 - 50 years	86	21.4
	50 - 65 years	5	1.2
	Above 65 years	4	1
Educational Qualification	Schooling	56	14
	Graduation	252	62.8
	Diploma/Technical Study	5	1.2
	Students	85	21.2
	Illiterate	3	0.7
Place of Dwelling	Madurai Town	240	59.9
	Nearby Village	35	8.7
	Other City Town	114	28.4
	Other State	12	3
Marital Status	Single	273	68.1
	Married	128	31.9
Family Type	Nuclear Family	307	76.6
	Joint Family	94	23.4
Monthly Income (Rs.)	Less than 20,000	48	12
	20,000 to 50,000	58	14.5
	50,000 to 1,00,000	155	38.7
	1,00,000 and above	140	34.8

The study conducted on the consumer preferences towards roadside eateries in Madurai reveals a diverse demographic landscape, influencing eating habits and choices within the urban environment. The detailed analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from 401 respondents, focusing on their profiles spanning gender, religion, age, educational qualification, place of dwelling, marital status, family type, and monthly income is presented

in the following table. The gender analysis shows a predominance of female respondents (58.4%), which could suggest a higher engagement or preference of women in choosing roadside eateries as dining options in Madurai. This might reflect broader social trends such as women's increasing participation in the urban workforce or greater social freedom in public spaces.

Religious demographics indicate a majority of Hindus (51.9%) followed by Christians (42.9%). The minimal representation of Muslims and Jains (0.7% each) and Atheists (3.7%) could reflect local population statistics or cultural dining preferences associated with different religious groups. The age distribution emphasizes a youthful demographic, with 76.3% of respondents being below 34 years. This suggests that younger individuals are more inclined towards roadside eateries, possibly due to lifestyle choices that favour convenience, affordability, and social dining experiences outside the home. Educational levels show a high rate of graduates (62.8%), indicating that roadside eateries appeal to well-educated individuals. This could be tied to the economic considerations and lifestyle preferences of educated young adults in urban settings. Most respondents reside within Madurai Town (59.9%), which supports the notion that roadside eateries are primarily an urban phenomenon closely tied to city life. The significant percentage of respondents from other city towns (28.4%) and nearby villages (8.7%) also indicates that these eateries attract patrons from both urban and semi-urban areas.

A substantial number of respondents are single (68.1%), correlating with the data on younger age groups. Those from nuclear families (76.6%) dominate the sample, which might reflect broader societal shifts towards nuclear family structures in urban centres. Income data reveals a wide distribution, with a notable percentage earning between Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,00,000 (38.7%) and above Rs. 1,00,000 (34.8%). This diverse economic representation underscores the accessibility and appeal of roadside eateries across different income groups, offering a variety of price points catering to both budget-conscious and more affluent consumers.

The demographic profile of roadside eatery consumers in Madurai City is marked by a dominance of young, educated, predominantly female, and economically diverse individuals. These eateries serve as significant social spaces that cater to a broad spectrum of the urban population, influenced by their lifestyle needs and economic capacities. Understanding these consumer profiles assists stakeholders in crafting targeted strategies that enhance the dining experience while considering the cultural and socio-economic fabric of Madurai.

Chi-Square Analysis of Demographic Factors and Consumer Behaviour at Roadside Eateries in Madurai City

Table No. 2

Chi-Square Analysis of Demographic Factors and Consumer Behaviour at Roadside Eateries in Madurai City

Test Description	Chi-Square	Asymptotic Significance
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	Value	(2-sided)
Gender vs Food Habits	8.253	0.041
Gender vs Food Orientation	38.779	0.403
Gender vs Awareness	8.898	0.031
Gender vs Food Addiction	43.653	0.003
Age vs Food Orientation	59.827	0.422
Age vs Food Habits	1.475	0.224
Age vs Food Addiction	66.761	0.001
Educational Qualification vs Food Habits	3.51	0.061
Educational Qualification vs Food Orientation	18.616	0.02
Educational Qualification vs Food Addiction	64.046	0.332
Monthly Income vs Food Habit	113.479	0.023
Monthly Income vs Food Orientation	113.479	0.0737
Monthly Income vs Food Addiction	30.697	0.0034
Food Addiction vs Awareness Level	70.36	0.386

This study explored the relationships between demographic factors and consumer behaviour at roadside eateries in Madurai City using chi-square analysis. The findings indicate a significant relationship between gender and food habits, with a chi-square value of 8.253 and a p-value of 0.041, suggesting different food preferences between men and women. Although gender shows a high chi-square value in food orientation, the lack of statistical significance (p-value of 0.403) suggests no substantial differences in food orientation based on gender. However, gender differences are apparent in awareness of food choices and food addiction, with significant associations indicated by p-values of 0.031 and 0.003, respectively.

Age-related analysis showed a significant link between age and food addiction, indicated by a chi-square value of 66.761 and a p-value of 0.001, revealing that food addiction varies across different age groups. In contrast, no significant associations were found between age and either food habits or food orientation.

Educational qualifications impacted consumer behaviour differently. While a significant relationship was found between educational level and food orientation (chi-square value of 18.616, p-value of 0.02), suggesting that food preferences vary with educational background, no such significance was observed with food habits or addiction.

Income level demonstrated a notable influence on food habits and addiction, with significant p-values of 0.023 and 0.0034, respectively, indicating that these behaviours vary with income. However, the relationship between income and food orientation, while having a high chi-square value, did not reach statistical significance (p-value of 0.0737).

Finally, the study examined the relationship between food addiction and awareness levels, finding no significant association despite a high chi-square value of 70.36. This analysis highlights how different demographic factors influence consumer behaviour at roadside eateries, with significant implications for local businesses and health advocates. Further studies could provide deeper insights into the causality and influence of cultural factors on these relationships.

Managerial Implications

A comprehensive survey examining various demographic factors viz., gender, religious affiliation, age group, educational level, place of dwelling, marital status, family type, and monthly income—illustrates the typical patron at these eateries. The findings show that a majority of consumers are female, suggesting a gender-specific preference or higher engagement with roadside dining options, which could be influenced by socio-economic factors such as increased participation of women in the urban workforce or their social mobility. Educationally, a large portion of the consumers are graduates, highlighting roadside eateries' appeal among the educated urban population, potentially linked to their lifestyle choices and economic considerations. The geographical data suggest that these eateries mainly serve city dwellers but also attract customers from nearby villages and other cities, indicating a broader regional draw.

The marital status and family type data show that single individuals from nuclear families form the bulk of the clientele, aligning with broader urban trends towards nuclear family structures and potentially reflecting lifestyle choices that favour eating out over home-cooked meals. Income levels among patrons vary widely, but there is a substantial representation from the middle and upper economic tiers, suggesting that roadside eateries in Madurai are accessible and appealing across different income groups, providing a variety of dining options that cater to both budget-conscious and more affluent consumers.

Understanding these demographic details is crucial for stakeholders in the food industry to tailor their offerings and marketing strategies effectively. This nuanced approach can help enhance the overall dining experience while addressing the specific needs and preferences of different consumer segments, thereby optimizing business operations and contributing to sustained growth in a competitive market environment.

Conclusion

The demographic study of consumers at roadside eateries in Madurai City reveals a vibrant and varied clientele, characterized predominantly by young, educated, mostly female individuals from urban and semi-urban backgrounds. These findings underscore the importance of these eateries as key social and culinary hubs that cater to a diverse spectrum of the population. For business owners and local policymakers, understanding these demographic nuances is critical for tailoring services and policies that meet the evolving preferences and needs of consumers. Enhancing the appeal and accessibility of these eateries

can lead to better customer satisfaction and potentially drive economic and cultural vitality in urban settings like Madurai.

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