



An Analytical Study on the Problems Faced by Food Truck Vendors in Reference to the South Goa District

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ABSTRACT

Food trucks have been around the world and it's quite prevalent in western countries with India racing ahead in embracing the concept. There are several benefits in operating a food truck as compared to huge investments made for any speciality restaurant or eateries. Amidst the pandemic, numerous eateries and restaurant owners have turned to food trucks as the most cost-efficient option, driven by the industry's great potential for future growth. A well-designed trendy and attractive food truck with an interesting menu attracts the younger generation and offers a unique and a casual dining experience to customers as compared to visiting a conventional restaurant. This study aims in understanding and examining the challenges and problems faced by the food truck vendors in the district of South Goa. The study reveals that more than 50% are educated and are aware of best kitchen, food safety and general hygiene practices. The most challenging issue faced by the food truck vendors are issue due to seasonal business, poor income due to weather conditions etc.

Introduction

As a land of diverse traditions and cultures as well as varied regional cuisines, India's food industry is constantly evolving and growing. The delicious and spicy Indian cuisine is complemented by many exquisite global cuisines we have welcomed and accepted with great love. In recent years, food trucks have gained traction in India as a new addition to the food industry. A food truck provides consumers with a variety of food and beverage options at different locations, similar to a restaurant on wheels. Kitchen equipment and required facilities are fitted inside these trucks and therefore, one can prepare and serve food from a truck. Therefore, a food truck is like an alternative to a conventional dining.

These mobile eateries on wheels feature everything from gourmet burgers to homemade curries, sandwiches to desserts, masala dosas to Mexican burritos, and also offer gluten-free and vegan options. The concept of food trucks is becoming popular due to their capacity to deliver delicious and distinctive food choices at places such as market areas and junctions, street corners, festivals, events, around institutions, universities and workplaces, tourist spots and more.

Goa, positioned on the southwestern coast of India within the Konkan region is not unknown to anyone, and holds the title of being the smallest state in India in terms of its area. Moreover, it is also the fourth smallest state in terms of population. Food trucks serving delicious and nutritious foods at economical price to customers around the world, are growing in popularity. While the craze for food trucks in India continue to grow, Goa is one of the states that is taken it on board and given its very strong Goan flavour. One could see on a trip to Goa, many food trucks parked at various beach shores, prominent junctions offering a wide range of cuisines and options to both local and international tourists at a much affordable price. Ross omelette with chicken xacutti, chicken cafreal with the local poi bread, shawarma, crispy fried chicken wings, khaati rolls, wraps and momos are some of the common food items these food trucks sell.

Benefits of Food Truck Business

- Unlike traditional dining establishments, food trucks do not require substantial funds for decorating dining areas, installing air-conditioning, lighting, or purchasing furniture hence the initial investment required to launch a food truck is significantly lower.



- The food trucks are a restaurant on the wheels and offer high flexibility in moving from one location to another. Depending on the market dynamics and the local regional festivals, social events the food truck can be parked on prominent areas attracting consumers.
- The operational costs involved in running a food truck is lesser as it requires minimum manpower and other resources.
- A food truck directly cuts the monthly rentals with a onetime capital investment.
- A well-designed trendy and attractive food truck with an interesting menu attracts the younger generation and offers a unique and a casual dining experience to customers as compared to visiting a conventional restaurant.
- In operating a food truck, the owner gets to engage personally with the customers and this helps to understand their tastes and preferences and accordingly modify the menu in terms of quality, servings or accompaniments.

Review of Literature

Palak Sharma (2016) in his paper mentions about the uniqueness of the concept and quickness of service in food truck operations. His research investigates the possibility and market prospects of establishing a food truck business offering North Indian cuisine in the Pune market. The examination of the market conditions and the development of a business plan rely on a mix of internal and external factors, with the goal of crafting a business strategy that can attract angel investors and venture capital. As food expenses represent a major portion of the costs, this sector is anticipated to expand, although the growth rate may fluctuate.

Yoon and Chung (2018) in their paper state that food trucks are growing popularity, and they are now part of the foodie culture. The outcomes of their research provide empirical evidence that the hygienic and environmental hazards associated with food trucks have a negative influence on customers' attitudes and intentions to dine at these establishments. Conversely, the hedonic benefits derived from the experience result in a favorable attitude and intention to visit. Furthermore, the findings indicate a significant relationship between consumer attitude and purchasing intention.

Gauri D.Shah and Darekar (2019) in their research article have brought out several issues and challenges faced by food truck vendors in two tier cities Pune and Mumbai which has an emerging market potential. The study explains the various laws and regulations to be followed and the mandatory licenses required for successful operations of a food truck. Their research study forms a basis of understanding to

the existing food truck vendors across our country and to upcoming entrepreneurs as the food truck business is considered as an unorganised sector and does not have clear directions and regulations at various states leading to several challenges and hardships in the industry.

Sara Khan and Edward Gordon (2019) in examining the operation of food trucks across different regions of the country, ranging from northern India to the southern part of India, a comprehensive discussion was held regarding the numerous challenges and issues faced by food truck owners. These encompassed aspects such as infrastructure, hygiene maintenance, the surrounding environment of the truck, parking facilities, and legal authorities.

As per an online article of Sakshi Singh (2021), the annual growth rate of the food truck sector in India was estimated to be 8.4 percent. The increasing preference for on-the-go food is due to the hectic schedules that individuals follow. Food consumption is now more flexible and not limited to specific locations. Food trucks were introduced as an affordable alternative to high restaurant rents, enabling access to a wider customer base.

Daniel McCarthy (2021) in his online article mentions that despite the negative effects of Covid-19 on the food truck market, there is optimism for its future. The convenience that attracted customers to food trucks remains a key factor in their relevance in the aftermath of the pandemic. Numerous food trucks, such as the Bombay Food Truck, have shifted towards deliveries to meet the demand from customers seeking their unique food and experience.

Statement of the problem

The food truck vendors in South Goa face various problems in their vending chores. The dimensions and the magnitude of the challenges vary from vendor to vendor and region to region. Some of the review of the literature on food truck industry which is presented in this study portrays the appalling conditions of the food truck vendors across the globe.

The Government of India through National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) though has taken enormous steps in formulating various policies and measures to facilitate better street vending practices and to help from the challenges faced by the street vending, the initiatives, policies and interests on food truck vending industry seem to be lesser. The present study is conducted to examine and understand the operations and the problems faced by the food truck vendors of South Goa district.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio - demographic profile of the food truck owners in South Goa district.
2. To study the challenges and operations of the food truck vendors.
3. To examine the various problems of the food truck owners.

Need and importance of the study

According to a recent study by a team of professors led by Fernandes M et al (2022), the tourists to Goa have an interest in food and gastronomic tourism is becoming a crucial component in drawing tourists. The study also concluded that Goa needs to systematically concentrate on its enormous potential for gastronomic tourism. The study clearly states that apart from the regular tourists visiting Goa for historic and cultural interests there is a much scope for culinary tourism which can contribute to the economy of the state.

The regional Goan cuisine with its unique blend of spices and flavours with its colonial Portuguese influence and the availability of the best of global cuisines at various evolving restaurant and eateries is definitely making a mark in the culinary map of India inviting tourists across the world. The slowly emerging food truck industry in the region has much to offer and contribute to the state's tourism. Therefore, it is quite important to understand and address the issues, challenges and problems faced by the food truck industry which by and large is still an unorganised sector that comes under street food vending.

There are not many studies conducted in this region pertaining to food truck operations and hence this present research study would provide valuable inputs and suggestions that would benefit the food truck vendors and other stakeholders and also shall show path to further investigation and studies in this area.

Research Design

For the present study, the descriptive method is adopted. In the research design, a systematic and most pragmatic approach is formulated making provisions for various steps to be followed by the researchers.

Profile of the study

The present study targets at the socio-demographic profile, working conditions and the problems faced by the food truck vendors in the South Goa district. South Goa with an approximate population of 6.5 lakhs, is one of the two districts of Goa with Margao as its headquarters. The study was conducted

during the period 2022-2023 in the following talukas in South Goa district covering the most tourists frequented zone which is also where the food truck operations are concentrated.

1. Salcete (Margao)
2. Mormugao
3. Quepem
4. Canacona

Data collection

Primary data is collected randomly from 28 food truck vendors operating in the above mentioned four talukas of South Goa district using a structured interview schedule consisting of closed-ended questions on socio-demographic working conditions and the problems faced in operations were incorporated to elude information from the food truck owners.

Secondary data were collected from online sources of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook pages of the food truck vendors and also from previous studies published in journals and from related printed books.

Limitations of the study:

This study is conducted during the period 2022-2023 with a limited sample size of 28 respondents as a Pilot study to the PhD research work. Since the food truck industry is in its initial phase of emergence in the district as compared to North Goa district, this study is to be considered as a micro-level learning in order to get first-hand information to develop an appropriate strategy for further research in future.

Challenges in operating food trucks

Goa's robust economic expansion is propelled by the impressive achievements of its industrial domains, including fishing, agriculture, tourism, and pharmaceuticals, of which tourism contributes majorly to the livelihood of the people.

- Unfortunately, tourism in Goa due to climatic conditions is seasonal and it is on peak between the months of October to March. Hence during the lean season, all tourism depended businesses suffer and this includes hotels and resorts, eateries, seaside shack operators and food truck operators. Vendors state that it becomes difficult to meet both ends during the lean period and there is less or no support from the government.

- Climatic conditions in particular during the rainy season, the customers do not visit food trucks and it is difficult for the truck to operate. Customers also feel that they may be prone to face medical issues to consume food outside specifically from food trucks in the rainy season.
- High license cost and no clear legal assistance and directions by government authorities.
- Difficult to get suitable location to station the food truck for business.
- Lesser space inside the food truck can accommodate maximum not more than 3 staff.
- Parking restrictions during festivals, local events.
- High competition to withstand over other fancy eateries and restaurants.
- Interference of government and local authorities and threat from police.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table No.1 Gender and Age of Respondents

Age (Years)	Male	Percent	Female	Percent	Total	Percent
18 – 25 years	04	14.30	-	-	04	14.30
26 – 35 years	06	21.42	02	7.14	08	28.56
36 – 45 years	11	39.30	01	3.57	12	42.87
Above 46 years	03	10.70	01	3.57	04	14.27
Total	24	85.72	04	14.28	28	100

From the Table No.1 we learn that there are food trucks owned in South Goa district both by men and women. The percentage of women owners are comparatively lesser than men food truck owners. On survey it was witnessed that though few food trucks are owned by women, most of them are operated on site by men (either spouse or son) of their house. The food trucks operated by women were seen functioning in the residential area. The information in such cases were collected from the men operating the truck. Some food trucks are managed by both husband and wife during busy season with help of one or two assistants.

Table No. 2 Educational status of the Respondents

Educational status	Male Percent	Female Percent	Total
No schooling	10.72 (03)	3.57 (01)	14.29 (04)
Schooling at primary level	7.15 (02)	3.57 (01)	10.72 (03)
Schooling at higher secondary level	21.43 (06)	3.57 (01)	25 (07)
Technical/professional schooling	21.43 (06)	-	21.43 (06)
Under graduate/Post graduate	25 (07)	3.57 (01)	28.57 (08)
Total	85.72 (24)	14.28 (04)	100 (28)

From the Table no. 2 showing the educational status of the respondents, it is seen that 50% of the respondents have completed an under graduate/post graduate program or a professional /technical course which is an added advantage and a positive factor when it comes to food industry. The technical schooling here refers to a professional course in catering operations or food production. Younger generation in Goa mostly prefer to undergo catering and hotel management programs either a short-term certification or a diploma or graduation aiming for an overseas land or cruise ship jobs.

Out of the 25% of the respondents who have been to higher secondary level of schooling, it was noticed that a considerable percentage of respondents have experience working in hotel industry in the kitchens and therefore approximately 75% of such skill force is quite aware of best hygiene, sanitation and food safety practices. The study reveals that only 15 % of the respondents have not been to schools are in the age group of 40 and above.

Table No.3 Food truck category (based on the location)

Talukas	Beach side	Market/Junction area	Residential area	Around Industrial/Institution	On the highway	Total
Salcete (Margao)	05	02	02	02	-	11
Murmagao	03	02	02	01	-	08
Quepem	01	01	01	-	01	04
Canacona	03	01	-	-	01	05
Total	12 (42.8%)	06 (21.44%)	05 (17.85%)	03 (10.75%)	02 (7.15)	28

Table No.3 shows that majority of the food trucks 12 (42.8%) are operating in the vicinity of the beaches or the roads towards the beaches at the South Goa district targeting the tourists who primarily visit Goa for the pristine beaches, for water sports and adventure games such as scuba diving, kayaking, paragliding. Margao has the maximum number of food truck operators as it covers city market and junctions, railway station, main bus depot, residential areas and also nearer to the world famous Colva beach.

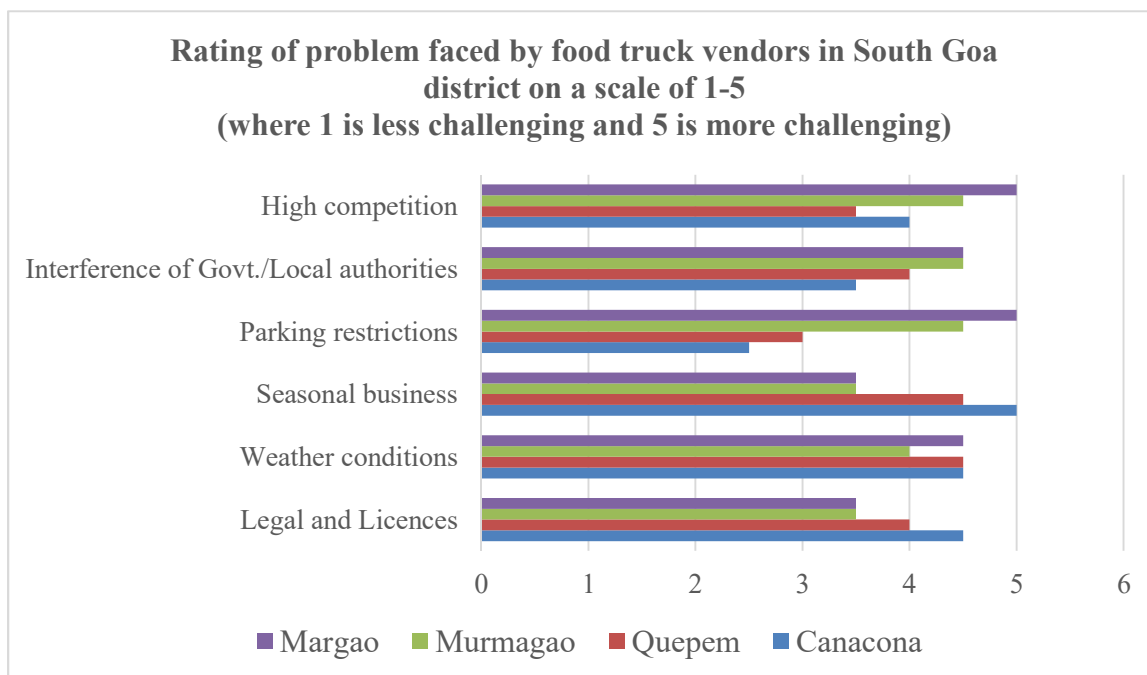
21.44% of the trucks are in the main market or junctions which are nearer to famous churches and temples and only 2 (7.15%) food trucks seen functioning on the highway leading to various beaches and tourist spots were also part of this study. The highway food trucks operate during the day hours as the

motorists or tourists do not have much options for eateries until they reach the tourist destination or the beaches on their way.

Table No. 4 Years of food truck business operations

Talukas	< 1 year	1 – 5 years	6-10 years	10 above
Salcete (Margao)	02	05	02	02
Murmagao	02	05	01	-
Quepem	01	03	-	-
Canacona	02	03	-	-
Total	07	16	03	02

From the Table No. 4 showing the years of operations of the food truck business in the four talukas of South Goa district, it is clear that only 2 food truck owners were operating the business above 10 years. The respondents brought to our attention that many food truck owners had to wind up their businesses incurring severe losses due to Covid-19 scenario and very handful were able to return back to operations recently. The table also shows that majority of the food trucks were operating between 1 to 5 years. Surprisingly many respondents in this category said that they saw a business opportunity by the end of the Covid-19 period, since many restaurants and eateries have shut their businesses, and in fact such shut down eateries started to venture into food truck business as the operational and labour costs were much lesser.



Source: Primary data

From the research study, it was analysed that the key problems faced by the food truck vendors are climatic conditions (15%), seasonal business (13.75%), parking restrictions (12.5%), interference of govt and local authorities (13.75%) and high competition (14%).

The tourist season in Goa is between October to March of the year with November to February being the peak season. The food truck vendors says that during the off season between April to September the revenues are lesser but the staff salaries have to be borne without much or any profits.

The climatic conditions also a biggest challenge in operating a food truck in the monsoon season unlike a regular restaurant which has dining space that can accommodate customers. The flow of tourist is lesser in the summer and the business purely depends on the local residents.

Finding a suitable place to station the food truck often is a big challenge and adding to it is the parking restrictions on roads and beaches particularly on festivals, local events and functions.

Setting up of a new truck and obtaining necessary licenses are another challenge as there seem to be not much assistance and directions from the end of government authorities. The high cost of licences and interference of government and local authorities often adds to the never-ending problems of the food truck vendors.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The study brought to the attention the key problems faced by these food truck vendors in starting up a new truck as well in the day-to day operations.

The study revealed that 50% of the respondent owners are well educated and have a good knowledge on Food safety and general hygiene practices.

Most of the truck operators have valid licences to do business and government should make the licensing process easier so that all other food truck vendors without license are issued required licences and can avoid unnecessary local authority interferences.

From the business perspective, food trucks seem to be more survivable than dine-in restaurants, given their operational attributes. The flexibility and freedom to drive the food truck around the city helps to attract more customers and explore more places and gather more customers.

The study suggests that the food truck vendors can partner with online food aggregators to deliver foods particularly during monsoon season to make better sales and profits.

The study suggest that the food truck vendors can collaborate with festivals and event organisers in promotion and also can be present in all such events.

The food truck vendors can actively promote their brand in social media platforms with the assistance of social media influencers.

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