

A study on street savouries: Exploring the world of urban eats.: A Study on Guntur Mirchi Bajji

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ABSTRACT

Street food represents an important component of urban food systems, offering affordable, accessible, and culturally significant culinary experiences. Among the diverse street foods of Andhra Pradesh, Guntur Mirchi Bajji has emerged as an iconic snack, celebrated for its distinctive flavour, preparation techniques, and association with the spice-rich heritage of Guntur. This study explores the cultural, economic, and consumer dimensions of Guntur Mirchi Bajji while examining its role in preserving local food traditions and supporting informal entrepreneurship.

The research adopts a descriptive survey design involving street food vendors and consumers in Guntur city. Primary data may be collected through structured questionnaires and interviews, while secondary information can be obtained from published literature, government reports, and food-related studies. The study analyses consumer preferences, purchase behaviour, hygiene practices, pricing strategies, and challenges faced by vendors.

The findings are expected to demonstrate that Guntur Mirchi Bajji serves not only as a popular snack but also as a symbol of regional identity, culinary tourism, and livelihood generation. However, concerns regarding food safety, infrastructure, and regulatory compliance remain significant challenges. The study recommends measures for improving hygiene standards, promoting digital marketing, branding the product as a regional specialty, and encouraging sustainable street food practices.

Keywords: Street Food, Urban Eats, Guntur Mirchi Bajji, Consumer Behaviour, Food Culture, Culinary Tourism, Street Vendors

Introduction:

1.1 Background

Street food, as defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), encompasses ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and sold by vendors in public spaces such as streets and markets. This sector serves as a convenient dietary option for an estimated 2.5 billion people globally, playing a particularly significant role in developing nations where it supports the livelihoods of numerous low-income individuals while contributing substantially to the urban economy.

In India, street food vending has become an integral aspect of urban life and culture, offering instant, affordable, and flavourful meals to millions. The street food landscape reflects the country's remarkable culinary diversity, with each region contributing distinctive specialties that embody local ingredients, preparation techniques, and taste preferences. Among these regional specialties, the Guntur Mirchi Bajji stands out as a particularly compelling case study, representing the intersection of agricultural heritage, culinary innovation, and vibrant street food culture.

1.2 Rationale and Significance

The study of street food such as Guntur Mirchi Bajji holds significance across multiple dimensions. First, it provides insights into the dynamics of the informal food economy, which remains inadequately understood despite its scale. Second, it offers a window into regional food cultures and the ways in which local ingredients and traditions shape contemporary urban eating practices. Third, it illuminates the tensions between urban planning, food safety regulation, and the livelihoods of street food vendors—a critical policy challenge in rapidly urbanising Indian cities.

Furthermore, the Guntur Mirchi Bajji case is particularly instructive because of its deep connection to the region's agricultural identity. Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh holds Asia's largest chilli market, and the variety of chillies cultivated there is world-renowned for its heat, colour, and distinct flavour. The Bajji thus embodies a direct link between primary agricultural production and urban culinary consumption.

Objectives

1. To study the history and cultural significance of Guntur Mirchi Bajji.
2. To analyse consumer preferences and buying behaviour.
3. To identify factors influencing customer satisfaction.
4. To examine hygiene and food safety practices among vendors.
5. To study the economic contribution of Mirchi Bajji vendors.
6. To suggest measures for improving quality and sustainability.

Research Questions

- Why is Guntur Mirchi Bajji popular among consumers?
- What factors influence purchase decisions?
- How do hygiene practices affect customer satisfaction?
- What challenges do street vendors encounter?
- Can Guntur Mirchi Bajji be promoted as a culinary tourism product?

Hypotheses

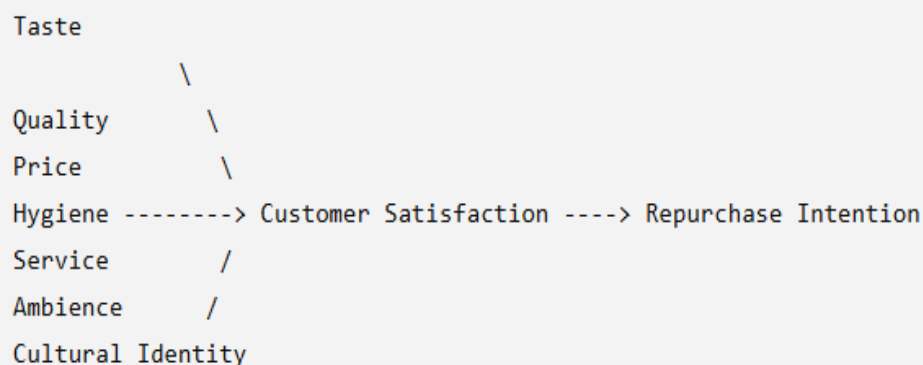
H01: There is no significant relationship between hygiene practices and customer satisfaction.

H11: There is a significant relationship between hygiene practices and customer satisfaction.

H02: Taste has no significant influence on consumer purchase decisions.

H12: Taste significantly influences consumer purchase decisions.

Proposed conceptual model:



Scope of the Study

The study is confined to selected Mirchi Bajji vendors operating in Guntur city. It examines consumer perceptions, vendor practices, pricing, hygiene, and business performance. The study excludes packaged snacks and restaurant-based Mirchi Bajji.

Literature Review

Possible themes include:

1. **Street Food Culture in India:** Discuss the evolution of Indian street foods, their socio-economic importance, affordability, and role in urban lifestyles.
2. **Guntur as the Spice Capital:** Explain the importance of Guntur chillies and their contribution to Andhra Pradesh's culinary identity. The GI-tagged Guntur Sannam chilli has contributed to regional agricultural recognition and market value.
3. **Consumer Behaviour towards Street Foods:** Review studies on taste, convenience, price, ambience, cleanliness, and repeat purchase behaviour.
4. **Hygiene and Food Safety:** Research conducted in Guntur found that many street food vendors followed only average hygiene practices, with a substantial proportion demonstrating poor sanitation, highlighting the need for improved food safety measures.
5. **Culinary Tourism:** Explain how traditional foods become tourism attractions and contribute to destination branding.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive Research

Study Area

Guntur City

Sampling Technique

Convenience Sampling

Sample Size

- 150 Consumers
 - 40 Vendors
- Total = 190 Respondents

Sources of Data

Primary Data

- Structured Questionnaire
- Personal Interviews

Secondary Data

- Research Journals
- Books
- Government Reports

- Food Blogs
- FSSAI Publications

Variables**Independent Variables**

- Taste
- Price
- Hygiene
- Vendor Behaviour
- Accessibility
- Variety

Dependent Variable

Consumer Satisfaction

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Variable: Age of the Respondents

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

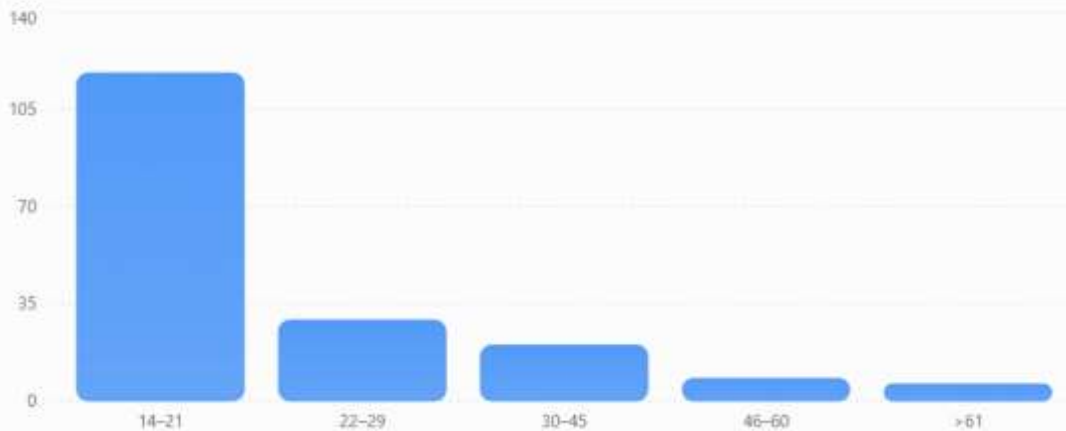
Table 4.1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents (N = 181)

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
14–21 years	118	65.2
22–29 years	29	16.0
30–45 years	20	11.0
46–60 years	8	4.4
Above 61 years	6	3.3
Total	181	100.0

Overall, the analysis reveals that the majority of consumers are below 30 years of age. This reflects the popularity of street savouries among younger generations, who are generally more inclined toward quick, affordable, and flavourful snacks. The age distribution also suggests that promotional activities and product innovations for Guntur Mirchi Bajji may be more effective if they are targeted toward young consumers, while also exploring strategies to attract middle-aged and older customers through improved hygiene, healthier preparation methods, and quality assurance.

Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Frequency of respondents across different age groups (N = 181).



Awareness and Experience of Guntur Mirchi Bajji

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

Table 4.2: Have you ever heard of or tried Guntur Mirchi Bajji before? (N = 181)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	158	87.3
No	23	12.7
Total	181	100.0

Interpretation

Table 4.2 presents the respondents' awareness and experience regarding **Guntur Mirchi Bajji**. Out of the total **181 respondents**, **158 respondents (87.3%)** stated that they had **heard of or tried Guntur Mirchi Bajji**, whereas only **23 respondents (12.7%)** indicated that they had **never heard of or tasted it**.

The findings reveal a **high level of awareness and familiarity** with Guntur Mirchi Bajji among the respondents. The overwhelming majority of respondents have either consumed or are aware of this traditional street savoury, suggesting that it enjoys strong recognition and popularity within the study area. Such a high level of awareness reflects the product's established reputation, widespread availability, and cultural significance in the local food landscape.

Favourite Type of Street Food among Respondents (N = 181)

Favourite Street Food	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Pani Poori	54	29.8
Samosa	28	15.5
Chaat	10	5.5
Guntur Mirchi Bajji	89	49.2
Total	181	100.0

Interpretation

Table 4.3 presents the respondents' favourite type of street food. Among the **181 respondents**, **89 respondents (49.2%)** identified **Guntur Mirchi Bajji** as their favourite street food, making it the most preferred item in the study. This is followed by **Pani Poori**, which is preferred by **54 respondents (29.8%)**, indicating its continued popularity as a widely consumed street snack.

Further, **28 respondents (15.5%)** selected **Samosa** as their favourite street food, while only **10 respondents (5.5%)** preferred **Chaat**, making it the least preferred option among the four choices. The results clearly indicate that Guntur Mirchi Bajji enjoys a dominant position in the preferences of consumers, reflecting its distinctive taste, regional identity, and strong cultural association with the city of Guntur.

The findings suggest that local traditional street foods continue to enjoy greater consumer acceptance than several other popular street snacks. The high preference for Guntur Mirchi Bajji also highlights its potential for branding, culinary tourism, and promotion as a signature street food of Andhra Pradesh. Vendors and policymakers can capitalize on this popularity by improving product quality, maintaining hygiene standards, and promoting the snack through food festivals and digital platforms.

First Encounter with Guntur Mirchi Bajji

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

Table 4.4: Where Did You First Encounter Guntur Mirchi Bajji? (N = 181)

Source of First Encounter	Frequency	Percentage (%)
At Home	72	39.8
In a Function	25	13.8
On Friends' Request	38	21.0
On Your Own	24	13.3
Others	22	12.2
Total	181	100.0

Interpretation

Table 4.4 illustrates the place or source through which respondents first encountered **Guntur Mirchi Bajji**. Out of the **181 respondents**, **72 respondents (39.8%)** reported that they first tasted or became familiar with Guntur Mirchi Bajji **at home**, making it the most common source of introduction. This suggests that the snack has become an integral part of household food culture and is often prepared or shared within families.

The second most common source of exposure was **through friends' recommendations**, with **38 respondents (21.0%)** indicating that they were introduced to Guntur Mirchi Bajji by friends. This highlights the importance of interpersonal influence and word-of-mouth in promoting traditional street foods. Additionally, **25 respondents (13.8%)** first encountered the snack **at a function**, while **24 respondents (13.3%)** discovered it **on their own**, indicating the role of social events and individual exploration in shaping consumer awareness. The remaining **22 respondents (12.2%)** selected **other sources**, such as local markets, food festivals, or street vendors.

Overall, the findings indicate that family, social networks, and community gatherings play a significant role in creating awareness and encouraging the consumption of Guntur Mirchi Bajji. The dominance of home-based exposure reflects the snack's cultural acceptance and its strong association with local culinary traditions.

Most Preferred Attribute of Guntur Mirchi Bajji

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

Table 4.5: What Do You Like Most About Guntur Mirchi Bajji? (N = 181)

Preferred Attribute	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Taste	81	44.8
Spiciness	71	39.2
Aroma	15	8.3
Most Preferred Snack	9	5.0
Others	5	2.8
Total	181	100.0

Table 4.5 presents the respondents' opinions regarding the aspect they like most about **Guntur Mirchi Bajji**. Among the **181 respondents**, **81 respondents (44.8%)** identified **taste** as the most attractive feature of Guntur Mirchi Bajji, making it the highest-ranked attribute. This indicates that the unique flavour and overall eating experience are the primary reasons for its popularity among consumers.

The second most preferred attribute is **spiciness**, chosen by **71 respondents (39.2%)**. The high preference for spiciness reflects the association of Guntur with its famous chilli varieties and suggests that consumers appreciate the authentic spicy flavour that distinguishes Guntur Mirchi Bajji from other street foods. In contrast, **15 respondents (8.3%)** selected **aroma** as their favourite characteristic, indicating that the appealing smell of freshly prepared Mirchi Bajji also contributes to consumer attraction.

A smaller proportion of respondents, **9 (5.0%)**, considered Guntur Mirchi Bajji their **most preferred snack**, while only **5 respondents (2.8%)** mentioned **other factors**, such as texture, freshness, or affordability. Overall, the findings demonstrate that sensory attributes—particularly taste and spiciness—are the dominant factors influencing consumers' preference for Guntur Mirchi Bajji. These attributes play a significant role in enhancing customer satisfaction, encouraging repeat purchases, and strengthening the product's identity as a signature street savoury of Guntur.

Description of the Taste of Guntur Mirchi Bajji

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

Table 4.6: How Do You Describe the Taste of Guntur Mirchi Bajji? (N = 181)

Description of Taste	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Taste	43	23.8

Description of Taste	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Tasty	63	34.8
Fantastic	34	18.8
Super	41	22.7
Total	181	100.

Interpretation

Table 4.6 presents the respondents' perception of the taste of **Guntur Mirchi Bajji**. Out of the **181 respondents**, **63 respondents (34.8%)** described the taste as "**Very Tasty**," making it the most frequently selected response. This indicates that consumers have a highly positive perception of the flavour and overall eating experience associated with Guntur Mirchi Bajji.

Further, **43 respondents (23.8%)** described the taste as "**Taste**", while **41 respondents (22.7%)** rated it as "**Super**." In addition, **34 respondents (18.8%)** considered the taste to be "**Fantastic**." Although different descriptive terms were used, all four response categories reflect favourable consumer opinions, suggesting a high level of satisfaction with the product's flavour.

The findings demonstrate that taste is a key determinant of consumer preference and plays a crucial role in influencing the popularity of Guntur Mirchi Bajji. The consistently positive responses indicate that the snack has established a strong reputation for its unique flavour profile. These results also suggest that maintaining consistent taste and quality can help vendors retain existing customers and attract new consumers, thereby enhancing customer loyalty and supporting the long-term success of this traditional street savoury.

Perception of Guntur Mirchi Bajji as a Representation of Regional Culinary Culture

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

Table 4.7: Do You Think Guntur Mirchi Bajji Represents the Culinary Culture of Its Region Effectively? (N = 181)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	163	90.1
No	18	9.9
Total	181	100.0

Interpretation

Table 4.7 presents the respondents' opinions on whether **Guntur Mirchi Bajji effectively represents the culinary culture of its region**. Among the **181 respondents**, **163 respondents (90.1%)** agreed that Guntur Mirchi Bajji is an effective representation of the region's culinary heritage, whereas only **18 respondents (9.9%)** disagreed.

The overwhelming majority of respondents recognize Guntur Mirchi Bajji as a symbol of the traditional food culture of the Guntur region. This strong agreement indicates that the snack is not merely viewed as a popular street food but also as an important element of the region's cultural identity and culinary heritage. The distinctive use of Guntur chillies, traditional preparation methods, and its widespread popularity contribute to its recognition as a signature local delicacy.

The small percentage of respondents who disagreed may reflect differences in personal preferences, limited familiarity with the region's culinary traditions, or varying perceptions of regional cuisine.

Nevertheless, the overall findings demonstrate a strong cultural association between Guntur Mirchi Bajji and the culinary identity of Guntur. This positive perception highlights its potential for regional branding, food heritage preservation, and culinary tourism initiatives, thereby contributing to the promotion of local cuisine at both national and international levels.

Contribution of Guntur Mirchi Bajji to the Cultural Identity of Guntur/Andhra Pradesh

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

Table 4.8: In Your Opinion, How Does Guntur Mirchi Bajji Contribute to the Cultural Identity of Guntur/Andhra Pradesh? (N = 181)

Contribution to Cultural Identity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Habit of Eating Spicy Food	93	51.4
Traditional Food	60	33.1
Legacy	28	15.5
Total	181	100.0

Interpretation

Table 4.8 presents the respondents' opinions regarding the contribution of **Guntur Mirchi Bajji** to the cultural identity of **Guntur and Andhra Pradesh**. Out of **181 respondents**, **93 respondents (51.4%)** believed that Guntur Mirchi Bajji reflects the **habit of eating spicy food**, making it the most significant contribution to the region's cultural identity. This finding indicates that consumers strongly associate the snack with Andhra Pradesh's renowned preference for spicy cuisine, particularly due to the use of Guntur chillies, which are famous for their pungency and distinctive flavour.

Further, **60 respondents (33.1%)** considered Guntur Mirchi Bajji a **traditional food**, suggesting that it occupies an important place in the culinary heritage of the region. The snack is widely recognized as a long-standing part of local food culture and is commonly enjoyed during festivals, family gatherings, and everyday street food experiences.

Additionally, **28 respondents (15.5%)** stated that Guntur Mirchi Bajji represents the **legacy** of the region. This reflects the belief that the snack symbolizes the rich culinary traditions passed down through generations and contributes to preserving the unique food identity of Guntur and Andhra Pradesh.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that respondents perceive Guntur Mirchi Bajji as more than a popular street food. It is viewed as an expression of the region's spicy food culture, a traditional culinary practice, and an important element of its cultural heritage. These perceptions strengthen its potential for regional branding, preservation of food heritage, and promotion through culinary tourism initiatives.

Factors Influencing the Choice of Guntur Mirchi Bajji over Other Street Food Options

Statistical Tool Used: Frequency Distribution and Percentage Analysis

Table 4.9: Factors Influencing the Choice of Guntur Mirchi Bajji over Other Street Food Options (N = 181)

Influencing Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Availability	45	24.9
Taste	122	67.4

Influencing Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Price	6	3.3
Authenticity	2	1.1
Nostalgia	6	3.3
Total	181	100.0

Interpretation

Table 4.9 presents the factors that influence respondents to choose **Guntur Mirchi Bajji** over other street food options. Among the **181 respondents**, **122 respondents (67.4%)** identified **taste** as the most important factor influencing their choice. This indicates that the distinctive flavour of Guntur Mirchi Bajji is the primary reason for its popularity and serves as a major determinant of consumer preference. The result highlights that sensory appeal, particularly taste, plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining customers.

The second most influential factor is **availability**, selected by **45 respondents (24.9%)**. This suggests that the widespread availability of Guntur Mirchi Bajji at street stalls and food outlets enhances its accessibility and encourages frequent consumption. In contrast, only **6 respondents (3.3%)** each considered **price** and **nostalgia** as the primary reasons for choosing Guntur Mirchi Bajji, indicating that these factors have a comparatively limited influence on consumer decision-making. Furthermore, **2 respondents (1.1%)** selected **authenticity**, making it the least influential factor in the present study.

Overall, the findings reveal that consumers prioritize **taste** over economic or emotional considerations when selecting Guntur Mirchi Bajji. Although availability also contributes significantly to consumer choice, factors such as price, authenticity, and nostalgia play a relatively minor role. These results emphasize the importance of maintaining the product's unique taste and ensuring consistent availability to sustain customer satisfaction, encourage repeat purchases, and strengthen the competitive position of Guntur Mirchi Bajji in the urban street food market.