

“A Bibliometric study of Food Patterns of Thali in India with special reference to Gujarati Thalís”

(Salla Vijay Kumar, Lecturer, IHM Ahmedabad)

(Vinay Namjoshi, Lecturer, IHM Ahmedabad)

(Shweta Mehta, Librarian, IHM Ahmedabad)

Abstract

Food in its fervor has made a much looked for entity of tourism that has increased its advent within the spheres of destination marketing, tourism development, and academia. Cuisine appreciation is an indelible aspect of the holistic, polysensual experiences that travelers seek these days (Crouch & Desforges, 2003; Everett, 2009). The study on food addresses a gap in knowledge concerning the concepts of image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions (which have been abundantly researched from a destination perspective) applied to cuisine and the travel experience. Specifically, this study’s purpose was to determine the research on the factors affecting the eating habits of people of Gujarat. The food patterns of travelers to Gujarat, such as their frequency of patronizing Gujarati culinary establishments, pattern of food, key sources of cuisine knowledge, and their opinion on traditional cuisine knowledge based on culinary experiences in the country have a mainstay not only by Gujaratis but also national and international tourists who savor. The vision of Ministry of Tourism, India to promote culinary tourism as a distinct tourism segment has formed impetus to the study.

Gujarat is the often referred to as the only vegetarian state in India even if having a large costal area. Its domicile entails Jains and the Vaishnavas in the region. Bohris were non- vegetarians. Wheat, jowar and bajri are the main staples. Some of the common ingredients are buttermilk, groundnut, sesame seeds, jaggery etc. Culinary Gujarat also can be divided into four regions North Gujarat, Kathiawad, Kutch, and South Gujarat. There are slight variations in eating habits and menu items and their preparation, because of the climatic and cultural vibrancy.

The research methodology used will include secondary information obtained from the hospitality literature drawing on influences in culinary Gujarat.

KEYWORDS:*Hospitality, Thalís, Gujarat, Cuisine*

INTRODUCTION

Local food served is to connect people of this land, heritage, customs and also the people around who trespass the local land and Gujarat is no different. There are studies food and drink have been ranked next to climate, accommodation, cost, sports activities and scenery as important destination attributes and an important activity during holiday(Jenkins, 1999) . A traditional Gujarati thali that is usually served for lunch or dinner at Homefront and restaurants consists of a combination of selective dishes arranged in a thali or plate with katoris or bowls. The menu on the platter ranges from rotli or chapatti that is Indian bread; a shaak/sabzi/ vegetable preparation, that is a sweet or spicy dish prepared out of varied combinations of vegetables and spices; a whole beans /gram preparation and rice or kedgree; dal (lentils) or kadhi, a thick gravy made of chickpea flour & yogurt and vegetable fritters known as pakoras. The gujarati snacks are one of the largest in number called farsaan such as pathra, dhokla and samosa among others; a sweet dish or mishthaan such as jalebi and mohanthal. And a glass of buttermilk complimented with kachumber salad comprising of freshly chopped cucumbers, tomatoes and onions

The routine meal of the Gujaratis includes dal-bhat-rotli-saak remains simple. The special occasions or festivals witness the change and associated with certain items like Undhiyu Jalebi etc, adhering strictly to the dietary rules regarding combinations of items to be served. For instance when kadhi is served, a dal preparation like mug ni dal or vaal is also served in the platter. If the sweet dish served is shrikhand or doodhpak that is the ones based on milk or yogurt, but raita although made of yogurt would not compliment such a thali. Desserts like Churmaa ladoo or lapsi that are wheat-based would find place in festive meals that are dal based.

The varied dishes that can be served in a Gujarati Thali have not been numbered as to how many will go as standard in one thali service portion. Every service provider have devised their forte and tried to provide limited to unlimited options and portions with a price tag in restaurants.

Going by a common stereotype fixed Gujarati thali would comprise one or two steamed or fried snacks called farsans, a green vegetable, a tuber or a gourd shaak (shaaks are main courses with vegetables and spices mixed together into a curry or a spicy dry dish), a kathol (braised pulses like beans, chickpea or dry peas), one or more yogurt dishes like plain curd, kadhi (yogurt and pulses soup), raita or sweet shrikhand, rice or khichdi, daal usually toor dal, and sweets like halwas, basundi or shrikhand. Some accompaniments never miss any meal of the day esp lunch or dinner sweet, sour and spicy chutneys, pickles, ghee and a salad of chopped vegetables served raw or may be steamed in spices. There is a sense of creating a balance of tastes and textures with coarse, grainy, granular, smooth, uniform, dry and wet dishes on the same platter, the sweetness, bitterness, sourness and heat of each main course would vary between dishes, and it is evident that the thali has more colours than a rainbow – the yellow of turmeric, the whiteness of dairy products, the redness of tomatoes, the green of leafy vegetables, the brown of pulses, and the colours of various spices, relishes and salad vegetables, are harmoniously part of a single thali.

The Indian breads served with a thali would include thick and coarse bajra rotla, thin unleavened wheat rotlis, thick and crisp whole wheat flour rotis called bakhris, parathas, savory griddle bread called the thepla, deep-fried puris, methi thepla or masala puri. The most common Gujarati farsans, snacks and mini-meals are designed to enable travelling short and long distances and keep well, tension free with these foods not falling slave to the availability of food and quality compromised and challenged. For example khakras are crisp wafer-like rotis made from wheat, cornflour or lentils that can be carried and eaten with vegetables or accompaniments or dhebras made from a mix of flours can travel better than rotlis.

We cannot generalize the Gujarati thali across India,

- The food of central Gujarat is comparatively sweet with ingredients like sugar or jaggery added to many dishes even the ones that are fiery hot (to balance the salinity of the hard water in cities like Ahmedabad),
- The food of Saurashtra or the Kathiawad peninsula has inclusion of garlic, onions and chillies. Common Kathiawadi delicacies are sev tamata (chicpea strips spread over a

spicy tomato gravy), lasania bataka (a semi dry preparation of potatoes cooked to perfection with garlic), raseela shaak (watery potato and vegetables cooked in a tomato curry), kadhi – khichdi (yogurt-based curry served with softened kedgree) and baigan bhartha (adequately tempered mashed aubergine), usually eaten with bajra rotla.

- The food of Kutch and Kathiawad peninsulas has dairy products like which are arid grassland regions with a large population of livestock,
- The food of Surat and other parts of Southern Gujarat uses vegetables, which is one of the wettest regions of Gujarat, gets bigger variety of green vegetables and tubers like sweet potato in the food.

Seasonal availability is taken care of with aamraas (mango juice) commonly served in summer while undhiyu which has pot roast vegetables and muthias (Methi leaves dumplings) during January.

DISTINCT FEATURES OF GUJARATI FOOD

Depending on the different regions, the taste varies in flavor and other aspects. The tastes alter with personal likes and dislikes in families. The universal mindset is that Gujarati food is towards the sweeter end including the Gujarati Dal - jaggery used in preparing dal and also some vegetable items. Some of the dishes have a combination of ingredients taste spicy, salty and sweet at the same time. Because of the hot and dry climate in summers with temperature soaring to above 40 °C, ingredients like lemon, tomatoes, salt and sugar are used commonly in preparing different dishes to avoid dehydration.

The cooking style of every cuisine is different and amidst Gujarati food is also quite unique. The method of preparation varies from stir fried to steam-cooked with the vegetables along with spices or dal being boiled. The tempering or vaghar (Chaunk) is added to it to enhance flavor of the dish. Vaghar is a procedure where depending on the dish, a specific combination of whole spices and other ingredients are fried in ghee or oil which is then added to dal or vegetables and kept on flame to inculcate the flavor in the main dish. One of the most common staple is khichdi

prepared out of rice and lentils and served with items like rice papad, pickles and curd/ chaas or buttermilk.

There is use of seasonal vegetables and fruits in abundance. For instance, in summers, as mangoes are available, the traditional Gujarati favorite dish 'Keri no Ras' or Aamras (sugared fresh mango pulp) dominates a Gujarati day more than the platter. This dish, which is savoured with rotli or pooris, (unleavened roundish deep-fried indian bread).

There are dietary restrictions and inclusions in many Gujarati families

- There is a custom of consuming green gram / moong dal on Wednesdays
- Keep fast regularly with their diet being restricted to dried fruits, nuts and milk.
- Latest inclusion of more fried and spicy items.
- Some communities in Gujarat consume non-vegetarian items like fish, chicken and eggs. For instance the Bohri and Kharwa community have fresh as well as dried fish. Some of the seafood usually consumed includes prawns, pomfrets, crabs and khandwas among others.
- Lately there are fusion recipes with a blend of Gujarati and Western cuisines

The factors affecting the eating habits of people of Gujarat in all these regions are different types of cuisines cooked because of their climatic conditions.

- North Gujarat thalis include farsans (snacks) including items like khaman, khandvi, kachori, mini-samosa, dhokla, and dahi vada.
- South Gujarat cuisine includes chillies in almost every dish. E.g., Undhiyu and Paunkh. The cuisine of Khathiawad is spicy with excessive use of chillies. A distinct combination of Dhebras (prepared with wheat flour, yoghurt, spinach, green chillies, sugar and salt) served with Chhunda (sweet and sour mango pickle)
- In Kutch the food is a simple meal. The most common dish in the Kutchi Thali is the Khichdi and kadhi or Bajra no rotlo, guvarnu shaak

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ashima Gupta, Mini K. Sheth, (2013) "Fried foods associated health risks in Gujarati housewives" only 5 percent subjects consumed deep fried foods daily. About 24 percent families used hydrogenated vegetable oil (vanaspati) for cooking purposes. Butter and ghee rich in saturated fats were regularly used by most families. The role of cuisine as an emblem of local cultural heritage has been widely examined (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Fox, 2007; Haven-Tang & Jones, 2005; Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

PROFILING A FEW MENU ITEMS IN THALI CULTURE

The food of the states of Northeast India, are heavily influenced by Chinese and Tibetan cuisines, and Gujarat are not noted for their levels of spiciness. It may be argued that the spices used in Indian cooking have a titillating effect on the palate which tends to be misconstrued for the "hot" perception. "Heat" when used in the context of food may be described as a "burning sensation on the skin and mucous membranes, including the inside of the mouth" (Brody, 1983, para. 3). It is a particularly unformulated because it depends on individual taste preferences. But there are exceptions in Kathiyawadi cuisine which is hot even by Indian standards. There is a medicinal and health concern in some Gujarati dishes like:

- Dhokla is a steamed fermented breakfast food found mainly in Gujarat state. It is prepared from the fermentation of Bengal gram and rice. It is steamed like idlis. The fermentation (lactic acid bacteria) contributes to the acidity of the product and make it sour in taste and improve the flavor. The antioxidant property of dhokla helps in managing age-related diseases and oxidative stress-induced degenerative diseases. Hence dhokla is considered as a diet menu item for diabetic patients.
- Buttermilk, the all-time favorite, is the liquid left over when butter is churned out of cream, and/or diluted yoghurt consumed with or without added salt and spices. It has less fat content and fewer calories compared with regular milk or dahi. Buttermilk is as rich a

source of calcium and protein as milk. Also known as chaach, it is easier to digest and the presence of live cultures helps in intestinal health. Buttermilk is suggested in the ayurvedic system

METHODOLOGY

- Literature Review
- Inner sources of data - previous marketing studies
- Outside sources of data collection - Media, print and Internet

DATA INTERPRETATION

Satisfaction with culinary experiences was measured in terms of five dimensions: a) service, b) food quality, c) diversity and authenticity, d) hygiene, e) atmospherics, and f) overall attributes. The dimensions that received a higher frequency of satisfaction scores were food quality, diversity and authenticity, and overall criteria. The majority of respondents “agreed” with attribute-statements within these dimensions. Although responses for the dimensions of service, hygiene, and atmospherics were all polarized towards the positive, the frequency of agreement responses was lower

There is a balanced combination of staples, like khichdi (rice and lentils or rice and mung beans), and chaas (buttermilk) and pickles as side, steamed cooked vegetables with different spices and dals and accompaniments. The use of salt, sugar, lemon, and tomatoes are used frequently to prevent dehydration. The jaggery in dishes is believed to neutralize the bland/ spicy taste of the vegetables. The farsan is a famous snack store in the daily life of any Gujartis and now among all people who are settled here for any amount of time

There is utilization of seasonal availability of vegetables. In summer, mangoes are used to make, Keri no Ras (fresh mango pulp) as an integral part of the meal. The spices used also change depending on the season with garam masala being are used less in summer and occasional fasting with restricted diet concerns is evident.

Today the Gujaratis food has very spicy and fried dishes. There are many chefs who have dished out many fusion recipes with Western and Gujarati food. Definitely major share is vegetarian, but non-veg items are also consumed in some places by some group of Gujartis.

Indian bread here is made of Bajra has nutritional value similar to other foods based on flours. In cold season, Saurashtra food consists of thick rotis, termed bhakri, made of wheat flour, garlic chutney, onion, and chaas.

Sweets (desserts) are served as part of a thali are mostly made from milk, sugar, and nuts. The dry preparations are made for festive occasions and or climate oriented like magas and ghooghra or aradiapak.

CONCLUSIVE IMPLEMENTATION

Both diversity and authenticity are considered to be important predictors of satisfaction (Jang et al, 2012; Tsai & Lu, 2012). The respondents in the study confirmed that they were satisfied with the cuisine diversity dimension of culinary satisfaction. They perceive the hygiene conditions variance by culinary establishment type. There is a slight but distinct difference in the modes of preparations and eating habits in the main three geographical regions of Kutch, Saurashtra and Surat. If we consider the spiciness of food, we can infer:

- Kaathiawari and Kutch food both are spicy with the use of red chill powder.
- The Surati's use green chilly for spiciness.
- Central Gujarat food is sweet with the use of sugar or jiggery (added to many dishes even the ones that are very hot and spicy)

Considering the regional Gujarati Thali menu items, we can infer with the selected service providers of study:

- The Kathiawadi thali consists of Khaman Dhokla, Raasawala Dhokla, Bajra Bhakri, Methi Thepla, Kathiawadi Akha Adad, Kathiawadi Stuffed Onion, Kathiawadi Dhokli

Nu Shaak, Ringan Batete Nu Shaak, Dal, Dal Dhokli, Khichidi Kadhi, Chaas. The accompaniment of the gud and ghee combination complements the thali.“

- A Saurashtra or Kathiawar Thali consists of sev curry with Bajri Rotlas with a dollop of white butter or ghee on this along with some green garlic. During the winter season, Muda nu Lotiyo made up of greens of radish with a little gram flour. Adequately tempered cabbage roughly shredded with some spices and Mogri is used for a raita and dessert, the adadia ladoo
- A Surti Thali comprises of various vegetables, curd, dal, rice, dessert, butter milk etc. It is very simple, delicious and filling thali
- A Kutchi Thali comprises of the bajri no rotlo, freshly churned white butter (makhan), light and delicious shrikhand, undhiyu, sev tameta nu shaak and chaas

Since ages the people of Gujarat have been practicing vegetarian cooking and serving their individuality in diversity. The Thali Meal of India is persistent ranging from north east west and south, namely Aalohir Exaj / Assamese Thali, Andhra Thali, Bengali Thali, Bhojpuri Thali, Chettinad Thali, Goan Thali, Himachali Dham Thali, Kannadiga Oota Thali, Kashmiri Thali, Kathiawadi Thali, Kumaoni Thali, Maharashtrian Thali, Manipuri Thali, Kerala Sadhya Thali, Oriya Thali, Parsi Bhonu, Punjabi Thali, Rajasthani Thali, Sikkimese Thali, Tamil Sappadu is a regional culinary experience. The traditional Thali is one of the best ways to know the Culture and Cuisine of any state/ community.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

During the study on Gujarati Thali, we have considered the various research scholars study conducted and the essence of the Gujarati Thali revived in the modern culinary context. Comparisons and SOPs cannot be formulated for the variety being offered by various stakeholders keeping the future audience in mind. It is imperative that each thali with x number of items irrespective of the service provider, has managed to satisfy the Gujarati culinary trail, to explore more.

CUE IN DISCUSSIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

After this study, we suggest to identify , explore through structured questionnaire various variables like the age group of people who want to try Gujarati thali, the number of items provided, the service providers - the thali restaurants and the restaurants providing thali, the factors affecting the menu engineering for the Gujarati thali especially through anthropology should be carried out to further affirm whether there can a standardization of the items in specific, the number of items in specific and explore the variety of never ending options.

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