

Street Vendors in Vietnam: Short Cultural and Economic Insight

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Abstract

The practice of selling goods on the street is widespread and significant in Vietnamese culture because it enables individuals with lower incomes to make a living and gives them access to more reasonably priced food options. This study looks at the cultural and economic significance of street vendors in Vietnam, including their influence on the cuisine of the country as well as the country's informal economy. The findings shed light on the significance of street vending with regard to the maintenance of traditional culinary practices and the formation of a sense of community among local residents.

Keywords: Food Vendors, Food Stalls, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

Food stalls that sell a wide variety of dishes that are both inexpensive and delicious line the streets and sidewalks of most major cities in Vietnam, making street vending a common and pervasive aspect of urban life in the country. These vendors are extremely important to the functioning of the informal economy because they create employment and income opportunities for a large number of people with lower incomes and add to the cultural diversity of the nation. However, there are also a number of disadvantages associated with street vending.

These disadvantages include a lack of legal recognition, and concerns regarding health and safety. This study intends to investigate the cultural and economic significance of street vending in Vietnam, focusing on its part in the development of the cuisine of the country as well as its influence on the economy of the informal sector.

2. Methodology

The research makes use of qualitative interviews with street vendors and customers in addition to secondary sources that discuss the history of street vending in Vietnam and the regulations that have been put in place to govern it. The methodology of the study includes also analysis, description, and synthesis. The significance from cultural and economics point of view is also presented.

3. Cultural Significance

The study of Vietnam's colonial past comes from a variety of academic fields, including as Street vendors play an important role in the culture of Vietnam's gastronomy because they make locally prepared dishes that are both affordable and authentic. Traditional Vietnamese fare such as pho and banh mi, as well as regional delicacies such as bun cha and com tam, are among the many dishes that can be selected from their extensive menu. The diverse regional cuisines of this country are reflected in many of these dishes, many of which have been handed down from generation to generation (Vu, 2015, p. 123).

The establishment of a sense of community as well as the promotion of social interaction among residents is significantly aided by the practice of street vending. Customers will frequently congregate around the food stalls in order to engage in conversation and enjoy their meals together (Tran, 2017, p. 34).

The act of selling goods on the street provides an important source of income and employment for a large number of individuals in Vietnam who are living on a low income. The results of a survey that was carried out by the World Bank indicate that street vending may account for as much as 5% of urban employment in the country (World Bank, 2014, p. 23).

Street vendors typically have low initial operating costs, and the adaptable nature of their businesses allows them to respond quickly and effectively to shifting customer requirements (Tran, 2017, p. 38).

However, they face a number of difficulties, such as a lack of legal recognition, harassment from authorities, and restricted access to credit and resources (Vu, 2015, p. 126).

Picture: Typical Street Food Vendor in Vietnam.



Source: Vrba, 2023, pp. 28.

4. Regulations and Obstacles

The environment in which street vending operates in Vietnam is one that is highly complex and frequently contradictory in nature. Many local governments consider

street vending to be a risk to public order and hygiene due to poor hygienic standards of street food vendors (World Bank, 2014, p. 25).

Vendors on the street are frequently subjected to confiscation of their goods by the authorities due to many aspects such as poor hygienic standards (Tran, 2017).

Moreover, in addition, these vendors' health and safety are put in jeopardy because they often do not have access to clean water, sanitation, or refrigeration (Tran, 2017, p. 39).

5. Policy Recommendations

There are a number of policy recommendations that can be made in order to improve the working conditions and opportunities available to street vendors in Vietnam. The provision of fundamental infrastructure and services, such as access to clean water and sanitation facilities, training and support for vendors to improve hygiene and food safety practices, and legal recognition of street vending as a legitimate form of economic activity are some examples of these (Vu, 2015, p. 129).

In addition, partnerships between local governments and associations of street vendors can help to clarify regulations and standards for street vending, in addition to providing opportunities for training and capacity building (Tran, 2017, p. 41). The last point is that making an effort to increase public awareness and appreciation for street vending can help to promote the cultural significance of the practice and encourage an environment that is more supportive of vendors.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that street vending is an important part of both the culture and economy of Vietnam. This is because it gives people with lower incomes access to more reasonably priced food options and helps to support their livelihoods.

Although street vendors face a number of obstacles, such as a lack of legal recognition and poor hygienic standards (lack of fresh water), there are policy recommendations that can help to improve the conditions that vendors are forced to endure as well as the opportunities that are available to them. Vietnam is able to support the preservation

of traditional culinary practices and promote a more inclusive and vibrant informal economy by recognizing the cultural and economic value of street vending.

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