

**ANTECEDENTS OF PURCHASE INTENTION
AT FOOD TRUCKS IN THE KLANG VALLEY,
MALAYSIA**

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ANTECEDENTS OF PURCHASE INTENTION AT FOOD TRUCKS IN
THE KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA

RAVINDRAN A/L PALANIVALU

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ABSTRACT

Food trucks are ubiquitous in major cities globally, their numbers slowly increasing over the past decade. There are very few studies covering food trucks globally, including studies on food safety. Globally, incidents in food safety are under-reported in most developing countries including Malaysia. The Klang Valley is noted to have the largest concentration of food trucks in Malaysia, servicing about 8.7 million people. Food poisoning incidents in Malaysia have been increasing at an alarming rate since 2007 and continues to be persistently high. Food trucks, which comprise a big part of Malaysian street food, have been implicated in this rising rate by some researchers. This paper will study the impact of concern for food safety, health, social and environment to gain an understanding on how this factor influences the perception of consumers in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur with regards to food trucks by using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The target population for this research are individuals who reside in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur who are 18 years of age or older. Facebook and WhatsApp web-based survey data collection methods were used by quantitative purposive sampling using non-probability sampling methods, and a total of 126 useable samples were obtained. Collected data was analysed with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for the purpose of data cleaning and to conduct descriptive analysis. The data was then processed for Structural Equation Modelling using Partial Least Squares. Finally, the inferential analysis was applied on the data for hypothesis testing through SMART PLS 4.0. 6 out of 13 hypotheses was supported. Mediation by attitude was supported with food safety concern having partial mediation while environment concern having full mediation. Studies show that consumers have concerns regarding the cleanliness and safety of food purchased from food trucks, while social consciousness was borderline insignificant in influencing attitude and purchase intention. The findings will contribute effectively to encourage food truck vendors to improve their safety profile to increase patronage while health authorities can concentrate on food vendors, vehicle hygiene and enforcement to improve food safety.

Keywords: Food truck, attitude, purchase intention, food safety concern

APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, for the fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Business Administration

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

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Signature of Student:

Date: 25 March 2025

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Om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā cakṣur unmīlitam yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ. -Vedas

I was born into the darkest ignorance, my teachers opened my eyes with the torch of knowledge. I offer my respectful obeisances unto them.

Among all living things, mountains and rivers, grasses and trees, even the sounds of blowing winds and rising waves, there is nothing that is not the nembutsu -Ippen

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

| | |
|------|----------------------------|
| ATT | Attitude |
| AVE | Average Variance Extracted |
| CA | Cronbach's Alpha |
| CR | Composite Reliability |
| EC | Environment Concern |
| FBD | Foodborne diseases |
| FSC | Food Safety Concern |
| FT | Food Trucks |
| HC | Health Consciousness |
| LV | Latent Variables |
| MAE | Mean Absolute Error |
| MGB | Goal Directed Behaviour |
| MV | Manifest Variables |
| n/a | Not Available |
| PI | Purchase Intention |
| RH | Research Hypothesis |
| RMSE | Root Mean Square Error |
| RO | Research Objectives |
| RQ | Research Questions |

| | |
|------|--------------------------------|
| SC | Social Conscious |
| SEM | Structural Equation Modelling |
| SF | Street Food |
| TRA | Theory of Reasoned Action |
| TPB | Theory of Planned Behaviour |
| VABM | Value Attitude Behaviour Model |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter 1: Overview

The first chapter introduces the pertinent subject matter of the study which will form the basis for subsequent discussion. It starts with a broad discussion in foodborne diseases (FBD), including food poisoning which is a part of FBD, food safety and environmental considerations when purchasing food. These considerations form the premise of this study. The discussion narrows down to street food and food trucks (the latter being a major component of Street food nowadays) which are implicated in the rising and persistently high incident rates in FBD globally and in Malaysia. This is followed by the problem statement, research questions and research objectives. Next, significance of study, justification, plausible contributions, scope and definitions are presented. The chapter is concluded with the organization of the thesis and chapter summary.

1.1 Introduction

Yearly there are approximately 599 million cases of FBD and about 419,000 deaths caused by consuming unsafe food globally (WHO, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

FBD are mostly preventable by upholding the hygienic sanitary quality of food (Fontannaz-Aujoulat et al., 2019).

Food poisoning cases increased by about 24% in 2019 as compared to 2018 in Malaysia. FBD cases contributed by food trucks are rare in literature (Abdullah et al., 2022).

Over the last few years, food safety issues have garnered significant interest as these are essential for public safety globally. However, research on food safety issues for mobile food trucks has not been explored fully and there is very limited research in this area (Mohd Noor, 2022).

In general, Street food can be defined as sale of ready-to-consume food and drinks in streets and public areas via stalls, motorized vehicles or cart. Street food (which includes Food trucks) has seen rapid growth in recent years in both industrialized and developing countries as it is accessible, cheap and operates longer hours compared to conventional eateries. It is an important source of employment in third world countries as it requires minimal capital, minimal administrative cost and generally not much education (Okumus et al., 2019b).

Recent studies on food trucks have exposed serious concerns regarding safety, quality, environmental and regulation adherence worldwide. Low-hygiene conditions of both vendor and the eatery, coupled with a lack of awareness on food safety standards cause frequent street food-related FBD in both developed and undeveloped nations. Health practitioners globally have become increasingly concerned regarding health and safety risks of street food with its inadvertent foodborne illness impact on the public (Okumus et al., 2019b).

FBD are a serious concern for nations globally and impose a preventable burden on the health system and retard socioeconomic growth by the unnecessary costs. About 7.7% of the global population has FBD yearly which contribute to about 7.5% of the global total mortality (Alhashim et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2020).

A vast majority of outbreaks on FBD are unreported and not investigated. About 1 in 10 people are estimated to become ill due to contaminated food, incurring an annual overall cost of about US\$109 billion due to foodborne infections in third world countries (WHO, 2022; World Bank, 2021).

The few studies done indicated that safety hazards for the public were persistently high, even when there was regular inspection of the food truck facilities. There is a scarcity of peer-reviewed studies on safety on street food and food trucks to provide an understanding on this matter (Okumus et al., 2019b).

Infections and diseases due to contaminated food continues to be a worldwide public health threat. Lack of food safety awareness is a persisting issue among customers in both developed and third world countries. In developing countries, the poor living standards, lack of personal hygiene and inadequate access to medical treatment causes FBD to be rampant in some nations. Poor food hygiene is implicated in about 49% of foodborne illness outbreaks in Malaysia (Odeyemi et al., 2019).

Limited knowledge on food safety and poor food handling by vendors are among the major causes of food poisoning in Malaysia. Food safety and hygiene at food trucks are poor with some consumers prioritizing taste and food appearance over hygiene and safety (Mazqhairea & Masngut, 2021; Ramu et al., 2023).

1.2 Background of Study

Among the factors that are important to consumers nowadays are food that is cheap, convenient, near to their home or workplace and enjoyable eating experience (Loh & Hassan, 2022).

Street food including food trucks supports the lower income consumers by its affordable price and ease of access. A hectic lifestyle makes many working individuals depend on street food due to cost and time saving factors. Street food safety and FBD are a major public health issue in the third world countries due to unhygienic food handling and lack of sanitation among vendors. Contaminated food will result in a foodborne illness outbreak. More than 190 types of illness can be caused by contaminated food (Hossen et al., 2020; Al Banna et al., 2021).

Street food is growing rapidly in many nations worldwide due to lack of time to prepare food at home, busy lifestyle, need for food variety, better tasting food, cheap price, and ease of accessibility for the consumer. Recently the safety and sanitation of food trucks are increasingly questioned. Research done in China, Turkey, Malaysia, and Brazil indicate that FBD outbreaks were caused by poor hygiene, lack of adherence to sanitary regulations and troubling numbers of contaminated food samples among food truck vendors (Alhashim et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2020; Rakha et al., 2023).

Most consumers with FBD do not seek treatment from health facilities as most of the condition being self-limiting. Consumption of street food is a major implicated cause of FBD due to compromised food, unsafe food handling methods, cross-contamination and lack of refrigeration storage (Alhashim et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2021; Choi et al., 2020).

Most food truck fare exert an adverse effect on consumer health due to compromised food safety and hygiene with environmental degradation by pollution. Food safety is the primary concern when it comes to street food due to the risk of food poisoning (Bellia et al., 2022; FAO & WHO, 2019a, 2019b; Rakha et al., 2023).

Poor knowledge regarding FBD among street food vendors is found in a considerable number of research in both developed and developing countries with non-adherence of street food vendors to the minimum health and hygiene standards cited as a leading cause of the persistent outbreaks of food poisoning. Handling of money with hands while selling food, lack of refrigeration and usage of contaminated water further compounds the risk associated with street food (Bellia et al., 2022; FAO & WHO, 2019a, 2019b).

Food trucks are highly popular in Malaysia and are easily found in most urban and suburban areas nationwide. The food industry in Malaysia is somewhat protected even from severe economic downturns as all have the requirement for daily sustenance, especially when the cost of the food is below what consumers can produce, in addition to helping save time for those returning home in heavy traffic and long office hours. Consumers' obliviousness to the state of hygiene of these vendors and their food offerings raises the question as to what factors may influence their intention to purchase like saving time, less cost of shopping and cooking or the lack of energy to cook after a long day at work (Mokhtar et al., 2018; Theng et al., 2017).

Lack of hygiene at food vendors including food trucks in public spaces is not a hindrance to purchasing for the Malaysian public. This can be easily witnessed on a daily basis by anyone living in the Klang Valley. Even when the food trucks are clean, there are an equal number that could do with improved hygiene in various aspects to ensure the safety of the patrons (Hakim et al., 2021; Ismail et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2020; Theng et al., 2017).

Even while the health and local authorities continue to advice the public to avoid unhygienic eateries, the incidence rates of food borne illness/food poisoning