

**CONSUMERS' PERCEIVED RISK AND
PERCEIVED BENEFIT ON ATTITUDE AND
INTENTION TO RE-PURCHASE FROM FOOD
TRUCK OPERATORS**

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INTENTION TO RE-PURCHASE FROM FOOD
TRUCK OPERATORS**

by

LOH ZEYEN

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**PERSEPSI RISIKO PENGGUNA DAN MANFAAT PENGGUNA
TERHADAP SIKAP DAN INTENSI UNTUK MENGULANGKAN
PEMBELIAN DARIPADA OPERATOR TRAK MAKANAN**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat niat pengguna dalam pembelian semula terhadap produk trak makanan berdasarkan anggapan risiko dan anggapan manfaat dalam konteks Malaysia. Baru-baru ini, industri trak makanan telah berkembang apabila pelanggan mula meneroka alternatif untuk makanan yang lebih mudah didapati, lebih murah nilainya, dan pada masa yang sama membolehkan pengguna mengalami emosi yang menyeronokkan apabila membeli makanan melalui trak makanan. Walau bagaimanapun, diperhatikan bahawa terdapat beberapa risiko dan kebimbangan berkaitan industri ini, terutamanya risiko keselamatan makanan dan risiko alam sekitar. Dengan pertimbangan bahawa tidak banyak kajian yang dijalankan mengenai topik ini, terutamanya di negara-negara Asia, penyelidikan ini bertujuan meneliti perkara ini dari persepsi risiko dan manfaat. Kajian ini mengapakai Teori Tingkah Laku Terancang (*TPB*), di mana anggapan risiko (risiko keselamatan makanan dan risiko alam sekitar) dan anggapan manfaat (nilai harga, nilai kemudahan, nilai hedonis) diperkenalkan sebagai pemboleh ubah bebas. Selain itu, kajian ini juga menyiasat kesan pengantaraan sikap pengguna terhadap hubungan anggapan risiko dan manfaat dengan niat pembelian semula. Kaji selidik keratan rentas secara atas talian telah dijalankan melalui Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, dan Instagram ke atas responden yang mempunyai pengalaman dalam pembelian produk trak makanan. Pakej Statistik untuk Sains Sosial (*SPSS*) dan Pemodelan Persamaan Berstruktur Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa (*PLS-SEM*) menggunakan perisian SmartPLS digunakan untuk

menganalisis data. Data kajian daripada 294 responden menunjukkan bahawa nilai harga, sikap, dan norma subjektif mempengaruhi niat pembelian semula produk trak makanan. Sebaliknya, risiko terhadap keselamatan makanan, alam sekitar, nilai kemudahan, nilai hedonis, dan kawalan tingkah laku dilihat tidak menjejaskan niat pengguna dalam pembelian semula terhadap produk trak makanan. Sementara itu, risiko terhadap keselamatan makanan, nilai harga, nilai kemudahan, dan nilai hedonis adalah faktor yang meramalkan sikap pengguna. Sikap pengguna adalah pengantara utama antara hubungan anggapan risiko (risiko keselamatan makanan) dan niat pembelian semula, serta hubungan anggapan manfaat (nilai harga, nilai kemudahan, nilai hedonis) dan niat pembelian semula terhadap produk trak makanan. Data yang dikumpul adalah berdasarkan tetapan di Malaysia. Oleh itu, keputusan mungkin hanya terpakai oleh negara-negara Asia atau membangun lain yang berkongsi latar belakang yang sama dengan Malaysia. Selain itu, hasil kajian turut menyediakan beberapa indikator pengurusan bagi meningkatkan tahap kecekapan perniagaan di kalangan pengusaha trak makanan. Pihak pemasaran dan penggubal dasar pula boleh membangunkan strategi dan polisi yang berkesan berdasarkan kajian ini untuk membangunkan industri ini dengan lebih baik. Di samping itu, kajian ini menawarkan gambaran baru mengenai cara perniagaan trak makanan boleh meningkatkan perkhidmatannya. Hasil kajian selanjutnya mengesyorkan kelebihan daya saing dan cara untuk mengukuhkan pengekal pelanggan yang boleh meningkatkan prestasi perniagaan.

**CONSUMERS' PERCEIVED RISK AND PERCEIVED BENEFIT ON
ATTITUDE AND INTENTION TO RE-PURCHASE FROM FOOD TRUCK
OPERATORS**

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate consumers' re-purchase intention towards food truck products based on their perceived risks and perceived benefits within the context of Malaysia. The food truck industry has been expanding recently as consumers have begun to explore alternatives for convenient food that is not only cheaper in value but also enables them to experience fun and pleasurable emotions, such as when purchasing food from a food truck. However, it is noted that there are several risks and concerns related to this industry, notably in terms of food safety and environmental risks. Considering that there are not many studies on this topic, particularly in Asian countries, this research aimed to look into this matter based on risk and benefit perceptions. This study adapted the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), where perceived risks (food safety risk and environmental risk) and perceived benefits (price value, convenience value, hedonic value) were introduced as independent variables. This study also investigated the mediating effect of consumer attitude on the relationship between perceived risks and benefits and re-purchase intention. A cross-sectional online survey was conducted through Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, and Instagram on respondents with prior experience in the purchase of food truck products. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using the SmartPLS software was employed to analyse the data. The results from 294 respondents showed that price value, attitude, and subjective norm significantly influence the re-purchase intention

of food truck products. On the other hand, risk of food safety, environmental risk, convenience value, hedonic value, and PBC were not found to substantially affect consumers' re-purchase intention towards food truck items. Meanwhile, risk of food safety, price value, convenience value, and hedonic value were proven to be factors that strongly predict consumer attitude. Consumer attitude was established as a notable mediator between the relationship of perceived risks (risk of food safety) with re-purchase intention, as well as the relationship of perceived benefits (price value, convenience value, hedonic value) with re-purchase intention towards food truck products. The data collected was based on the setting of Malaysia; thus, the results might be only applicable to other Asian or developing countries that share a similar background with this country. Nonetheless, the results provide some managerial indicators to improve the business efficiency of food truck operators. Marketers and policymakers can also develop effective strategies and policies based on this study to develop this industry further. Additionally, the study offers a fresh overview of how the food truck business can improve its services. The results of the study further recommend the competitive advantages and ways to strengthen customer retention that can improve business performance.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the background of the study. The background of the study includes the eating-out scenario in Malaysia, the definition of a food truck, the history of food trucks, the food truck scene in Malaysia, and the issues and problems related to the food service industry and the food truck industry in Malaysia. In particular, issues pertaining to food safety and the environment are thoroughly explained in the following part of the chapter. Subsequently, the problem statement of the study is stated, followed by the research objectives and research questions. Next, the significance of the study is presented in terms of both theoretical contributions and practical implications. Lastly, this chapter ends by presenting the definition of key terms used in the study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Due to rapid changes in lifestyle and family structure, consumers' food choices and consumption patterns are no longer the same as they were 20 years ago (Choi, Lee, & Ok, 2013). In today's society, fast and instant products, typically those that exhibit on-the-go characteristics, are highly expected by a majority of consumers (Bidar & Farkhari, 2022; Ibrahim, 2011). According to Azevedo (2012), eating habits are closely related to cultural, sociological, economical, and psychological dimensions. Ford (2000) emphasized that food shares a close relationship with human society and

is perceived as a culture instead of a need to survive in the current era. It has further been pointed out that food has altered from a fundamental need of life into a desire; this change is impacted by the shift of socio-demographics, labour force participation, and take-home salary (Govender, 2017). This is the reason that, nowadays, eating-out is a more common practice than cooking at home.

1.2.1 The Eating-out Scene

In a society where the feeding population is changing due to the process of urbanisation, the lifestyle of most consumers has shifted; most individuals spend more time working, studying, and getting stuck in traffic before reaching their destinations, meaning that the hours allocated for preparing food at home is considered a time-consuming activity (Auad et al., 2019; Lorient & Pelissari, 2017). Hence, eating out is an alternative to source for food, especially for working mothers from multiple income households. Besides, the increase in take-home salaries due to urbanisation has influenced consumers to change their attitude towards food, such that the practice of eating out has become a social activity in which people invest time in to maintain relationships with their significant ones by having meals and gatherings together instead of munching down food alone (Capstick, 2011; Finkelstein, 1989). Furthermore, eating-out behaviour is perceived as an alternative solution to hunger problems for individuals who seek convenient and time-saving options to fill their stomach while also engaging in social interactions (Auad et al., 2019). Food away from home does not only include food that is consumed outside, but also food that is bought or prepared outside and consumed at home (Helen Lee Siew Heng, 2007).

In the case of Malaysia as a developing country, rapid urbanisation and development has caused the eating habits of Malaysians to change, whereby eating food away from home has become a way of life in recent years (Poulain, Tibère, Laporte, & Mognard, 2014). According to research by Poulain in 2014, the frequency of consuming at least one meal per day away from home was 64.1% in Malaysia, and those who enjoy at least one takeout meal at home per day accounted for 12.5% (refer to Figure 1.1). This is the reason Malaysia is ranked as the third country in the world in terms of the frequency of eating out with a score that is 14% higher than the average figure (see Table 1.1). Notably, street food and self-service eateries are the most popular choices among those who outsource their meals in the Asia Pacific region (Nielsen, 2016).

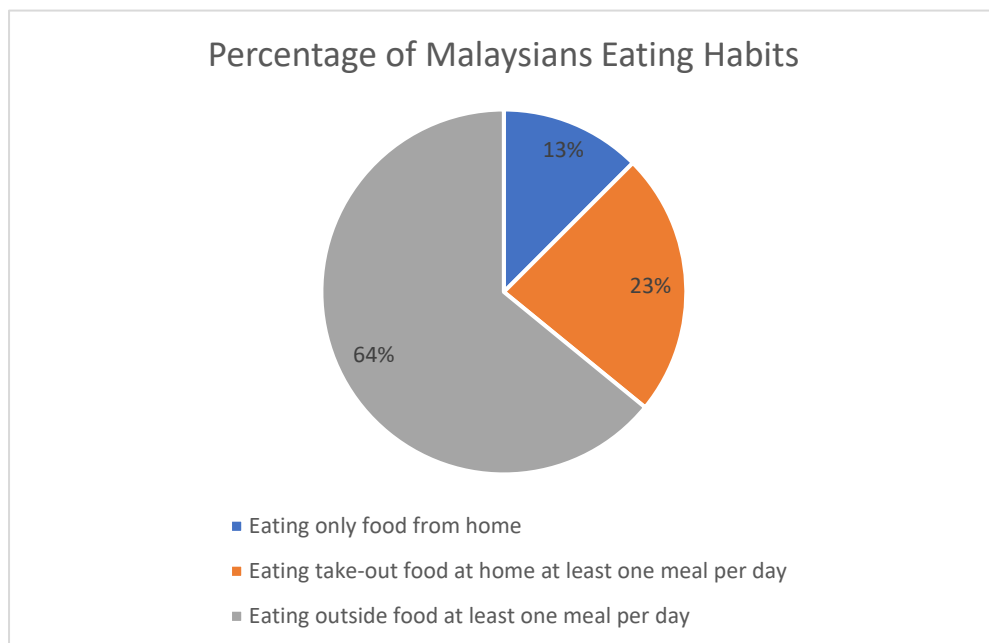


Figure 1.1: *Percentage of Malaysians Eating Habits*

Source: *Adapted from Nielsen (2016)*

Table 1.1

Top 10 Countries that Exceed the Global Average (9%) of Eating Food Away from Home At Least Once a Day

Countries	Percentage
Hong Kong	26%
Taiwan	25%
Malaysia	23%
Thailand	22%
Morocco	20%
Singapore	19%
Brazil	17%
Vietnam	16%
Saudi Arabia	15%
India	14%

Source: *Adapted from Nielsen (2016)*

According to several scholars, street food (which includes food stalls and fast food like fried chicken and pizza) is one of the most common choices for consumers who enjoy food away from home (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, & Aksoy, 1996). Past

literature also mentions that this kind of food is heavily consumed in communities, especially by working adults who do not have spare time to prepare food and thus prefer grab-and-go food as a time-saving, convenient, available, and relatively affordable option (Choi et al., 2013; Devine et al., 2009; Kaynak et al., 1996). Street food is also defined as ready-to-eat food that requires minimum preparation, is sold along the streets for immediate consumption, and is accessible through mobile trucks, push carts, selling booths, and food stands; these types of food are labelled as higher quality than fast food (Choi, 2016; Powell, 1990; Tinker, 1999). In other words, it is readily consumed food that is prepared ahead at home and does not require further preparation on site (Dardano, 2003). Along these lines, Loriato and Pelissari (2016) pointed out that people who spend less time cooking or feel stressed when cooking are more likely to rely on ready-for-immediate-consumption food, resulting in a massive increase in demand for convenient food, and consequently, the heightened popularity of street food as a food choice that supports the eating-out habit. In the case of Malaysia, it topped the list of countries that dine out the most at street eateries by exceeding 51% of the global average (Nielsen, 2016). Roadside stalls and hawker centres in Malaysia are the main places where consumers who eat food-away-from-home frequently patronise due to the unique local taste and relatively cheap price (Nielsen, 2016).

On the other hand, fast food is characterised as food that is able to be prepared quickly and consumed easily without using plates and extra cutlery. It is also noted as a financially affordable food alternative to homecooked food (Goyal & Singh, 2007; Royle & Towers, 2002). Due to these attributes, fast food is also one of the top choices among those who prefer outside food (Habib, Dardak, & Zakaria, 2011). These outlets usually serve western delights such as burgers and fried chicken, which are widely

accepted and enjoyed among locals. It is this combination of characteristics from roadside stalls, hawker centres, and fast-food outlets that has led the food truck sector (which is characterised as a mobile food business that serves fine quality food at relatively lower prices) to gain the nation's attention.

1.2.2 Definition of a Food Truck

A food truck is defined as a motorised vehicle with a built-in compact kitchen and cooking facilities used by food truck vendors to prepare and sell food (Ideris, Zainum, Mustafa, Nordin, & Zainol, 2017). It typically serves food ranging from simple comfort food to gourmet cuisine (Esparza, Gazley, Tschirhart, Walker, & Rossman, 2013). Unlike brick-and-mortar restaurants, food trucks operate their business by moving from location to location on a daily basis (Yoon & Chung, 2018). Besides, the food truck business differs from other types of eateries because it has a built-in kitchen, making it also known as a mobilised restaurant (Loriato & Pelissari, 2017). Instead of purely offering food items meant for immediate consumption along the street, modern food truck vendors usually distinguish their own business from traditional food trucks by referring to themselves as a 'gourmet food truck' that serves high-status food (Esparza et al., 2013). They create their own branding via brilliant designs on their truck, gourmet food made from finer ingredients, and community engagement through social media platforms to attract and impress customers (Esparza et al., 2013; Hawk, 2013). It is also clear that the food truck differs from other mobile eateries through its offering of exotic and unique features of food which consumers are able to experience in a special eating atmosphere (Yoon & Chung, 2018).

Moreover, some food truckers even recognise themselves as food providers with gastronomical knowledge and well-trained hygienic practices in the process of their business operations (Alfiero, Lo Giudice, & Bonadonna, 2017).

In summary, food trucks are defined as mobile eateries which capture the following attributes: mobility, high quality food at an affordable price, and a unique name and design that catches consumers' attention (McNeil & Young, 2019). It can also be simplified that consumers usually seek food truck products because it is affordable and convenient, as food is usually served in the grab-and-go style (Shin, Kim, & Severt, 2019).

The food truck industry has expanded as consumers are looking for good food choices at budget-conscious prices (Yoon & Chung, 2018). Apart from the low start-up cost of this business, consumers' fondness in experiencing new cuisines with cheap and economical prices is also a factor that has increased demand in this industry. Moreover, in addition to focusing on convenience attributes, food truck consumers also seek pleasure from their consumption experience and consider it a socialising activity (Auad et al., 2019). Indeed, people are drawn to the excitement they experience when patronising food truck eateries (Shin et al., 2019). According to Ibrahim (2011), food trucks offer meals that provide a wide variety of experiences while requiring less hassle and money than ordinary restaurants. Specifically, food trucks possess the following attributes: they do not require reservations and booking, consumers do not need to worry about finding parking, and consumers save time without having to be seated or wait for food to be served. In Malaysia, the food truck industry is quite akin to the fast food industry; it serves fine dining cookery in a fast and convenient method (Gunaratnam, 2015; Ideris et al., 2017).

1.2.3 History of Food Trucks

Food trucks are known to originate from the United States. According to Daniel Engber (2014), food trucks first existed in the form of “chuck wagons” back in 1866 in the United States, which served cheap and quick food to factory workers. It was labelled “roach coach” in the second transformation due to its misperception as an eatery that serves dirty food which causes food poisoning. The community only considered it due to its cheap price and convenience during break time. The first modern food truck, Kogi BBQ, hit the streets of Los Angeles in 2010 serving Korean fusion tacos, marking the latest evolution of the food truck. Other than selling exotic fusion food and creating a brand image through truck design, relying heavily on social media to interact with the consumers (Ibrahim, 2011) is also one of the gaps between the modern food truck and traditional ones. This kind of food vending pattern is seen as a way to expand economic opportunities as it is considered a food choice which is more cost-friendly and easier to consume (Cities, 2013).

In Malaysia, the first mobile food business originated as tricycles or motorbikes ridden along roads to sell fritters, fresh vegetables, ice cream, and local buns, particularly familiarised as the “roti man” back in the 1950s (Ragavan, 2014). As elaborated by Ragavan (2014), the second era of the local food truck mainly saw plain moving trucks with no decoration on their vehicles, offering local delights such as Luk-Luk, cendol, nasi lemak, and Ramly burgers; these trucks are still easily spotted today. Currently, food trucks are considered an alternative to street peddlers (Durai, 2016). Through the launch of the first modern food truck in Klang Valley in 2014, the food truck sector in Malaysia has since entered the third era, where gourmet food is served using fine ingredients in a stylish truck with brilliant designs. Therefore, in

Malaysia, the business of food trucks can be classified into a few groups, namely the traditional food truck, the gourmet food truck, and the restaurant-based food truck (i.e., pop-up restaurant) (Mokhtar, Othman, & Ariffin, 2018).

1.2.4 Food Truck Scene in Malaysia

While the United States is one of the countries where the food truck business is well-established in the food industry, the food truck industry in Malaysia marked its foray with the first food truck, La Famiglia, launched in Klang Valley back in 2014 (Wahab, Halim, Rashid, & Adam, 2017). This truck offered assorted pasta dishes at relatively cheap prices, which matched the spending power of their main target, i.e., students and office workers (Venner-Pack, 2014). Since then, three more trucks emerged, namely SpagMe, The Royal Post, and The Humble Chef, and are considered the pioneers in this industry that brought the food truck business into the warm-up stage in Malaysia. It is now noted as a new popular dining trend which people find fashionable and can be found in several urban locations in Malaysia (Balasubramanian & Krisnamoorthy, 2018).

Starting a food truck business has a lower perceived risk compared to a brick-and-mortar restaurant, mainly due to the former's low start-up cost and nature of the business that enables vendors to switch operating locations to target potential customers. It also receives strong support from the government, which explains how this industry bloomed into 130 licensed food trucks just in Selangor in 2016. This number was expected to at least double in 2018, according to the state's executive councillor (see Figure 1.2) (Balasubramanian & Krisnamoorthy, 2018; Palansamy,

2016). Other big cities such as Penang have followed closely. In 2018, the Penang International Food Festival held an event called the “Food Truck Invasion”, which aimed to break the record by inviting 150 trucks from Malaysia to participate in its two-day programme ("Penang food fest hoping to set food truck rally record," 2018). Like most countries, the foremost reasons for Malaysians to patronise food trucks are, unsurprisingly, to enjoy restaurant-class food at a cheaper price, to customise their meals according to their preferences (despite a limited food budget) via food trucks' more flexible menus, as well as to obtain and consume food more conveniently (Durai, 2016; Thiagarajan, Kumar, & Abbasi, 2021; Yunus, 2015). According to Choi (2016), one of the advantages of running an open-air eatery business is that it is easier to attract potential customers who can access the venture without much effort.

The government is showing support for the food truck industry by taking initiatives to legalise this business model via legal permits and guidelines for food truckers. The Malaysia Small Medium Enterprise Corporation (SME Corp. Malaysia) also drew out a sequence of standard criteria and procedures for food truck start-ups to encourage more entrepreneurs to participate in this industry. Besides, major events such as the KL Food Truck Feast and Food Truck Invasion have been organised to promote this industry to the local community. Another significant action taken by the government is the launch of a food truck park in Tapak, Kuala Lumpur involving 40 licensed food trucks, with six more to open soon in the city (Thiagarajan, 2017). Additionally, offering opportunities to food truck operators to market their products during the SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur back in 2017 was one of the biggest actions in promoting this industry. According to Rajan (2017), the cleanliness and food quality of food truck products are not guaranteed; this was overcome by having a number of athletes and coaches as customers during the SEA Games. Meanwhile, the launching

of a permanent food truck carnival in Batu Lanchang every Saturday night also marked a new milestone for the food truck industry in Penang. With at least 20 food trucks ranging from Korean food to American cuisine every week, the event is overwhelmed by a large crowd of visitors, such that food truck owners have high hopes that it will soon be developed into a tourist attraction (Ali, 2019).

Briefly, this section has illustrated that the demand for food trucks in Malaysia has increased steadily throughout these few years, which directly expanded supply (number of food trucks) in the industry (Thiyagarajan et al., 2021). However, this increase has also raised several concerns, which are addressed more thoroughly in the following subsection.

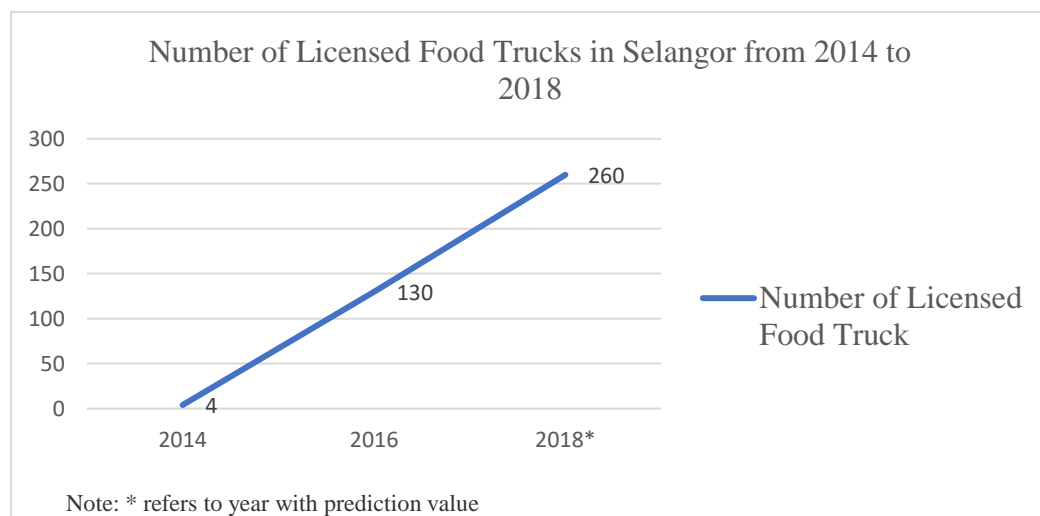


Figure 1.2: *Number of Licensed Food Trucks in Selangor from 2014 to 2018*
Source: Adapted from Balasubramanian and Krisnamoorthy (2018), Palansamy (2016), and Veneer-Pack (2014)

1.2.5 Issues in the Food Service Industry and Their Relationship with Food Trucks in Malaysia

In this section, the issues and challenges faced by the food service industry in Malaysia are identified, and the failure and success factors of the food business are discussed. This section also includes a description of the current situation of the food truck industry in Malaysia.

The food and beverage (F&B) industry is one of the top industries that contributes to the growth of GDP in Malaysia, accounting for RM40.6k million per annum of the GDP by economic activity at current prices in 2018 (Ministry of Finance Malaysia, 2019). According to Dr Ghaz (2017), there are 118,277 food and dining services established in Malaysia, which generate an estimated gross output of RM42.6 million. Given its fast-developing speed, the food service industry in Malaysia has created various opportunities for service providers to own a share of the economic pie (Chan, Hassan, & Boo, 2014). With low entry barriers and great opportunities, a lot of entrepreneurs have since penetrated the business, hence creating fierce competition within the industry (Lee, Lee, Chua, & Han, 2016). The turbulence of this industry has, however, resulted in the shutdown of many eatery businesses within the first two or three years of operation (Lee et al., 2016). It is reported that around 25% of new businesses fail to operate for more than a year, while almost 50% of businesses fail to survive for more than five years (Ghaz, 2017; Lee et al., 2016).

It is noted that 60% of food establishments fail because they are not able to meet or satisfy consumers' needs and wants, such that consumers do not return to the premise upon not receiving what they expect (Mensah & Mensah, 2018). Therefore, scholars and industry experts have identified several issues and challenges deemed to be related

to the food service industry. To stand out within the industry, food service operators should enhance their services based on an appropriate marketing mix by identifying the evolvement of consumer preferences, such as changes in lifestyle and spending patterns (Lee et al., 2016). For example, consumers nowadays tend to eat out more frequently and do not mind paying extra to enjoy higher quality food. Moreover, green practices are being emphasised lately, and the population that is willing to pay more to eatery businesses that implement these practices is growing (Lee et al., 2016). Rokka (2008) explained that consumers translate their environmental awareness to their purchasing behaviour, whereby they may choose environment-friendly products as part of their responsibility to solve environmental problems. However, to underscore the convenience attribute, it is unavoidable that most food packaging leads to an increase in packaging waste (Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008). Hence, restaurant operators should provide environmentally friendly services; failure to do so may result in consumer avoidance since some consumers tend to stay away from food choices that harm the environment (Lee et al., 2016; Rokka & Uusitalo, 2008). In the context of the food truck scene, one of the reasons consumers refuse to purchase street food is the negative impact this industry has on the surrounding environment, such as the over-usage of disposables (Choi et al., 2013; Yoon & Chung, 2018).

Meanwhile, it has been found that consumers are highly sensitive towards the negative impression and perception they hold when visiting a food establishment; a single negative review influences consumers' decision and hence, causes a business to fail (Ghaz, 2017). Negative perception is thus regarded as a major challenge, as a majority of consumers do not re-visit eateries that gave them negative impacts (Chua, Othman, Boo, Abkarim, & Ramachandran, 2010; Mensah & Mensah, 2018). Moreover, it is mentioned that consumers tend to focus more on negative than positive impacts,

meaning that service providers should pay extra attention to this aspect. Since bad perceptions can induce avoidance behaviour, investigating the root cause of negative perceptions is crucial for a business to succeed in the long run (Ferrera, 2015). Chua (2010) explained that major negative impressions towards food establishments usually stem from the cleanliness and hygiene aspects of the premises, where incidents such as cockroaches and lizard tails found in food can leave consumers with bad impressions. Correspondingly, Lee (2016) expressed that food safety and hygiene is the prime challenge for an eatery business, and that consumers perceptions are different depending on where the food premise is located. For example, customers have different expectations of food hygiene in indoor restaurants compared to open-air food stalls. It was further pointed out by Chan (2014) that most food service failures are caused by food safety issues, especially when the quality of the food and drinks served to patrons is diminished by the presence of harmful substances.

On the other hand, business experts suggest that food vendors should focus on customers' repeat purchase (Mensah & Mensah, 2018; Silber, Israeli, Bustin, & Zvi, 2009; Thiagarajan et al., 2021). Repeat purchasing is important since it indicates the success of a business in a long run (Mensah & Mensah, 2018) and is regarded as a main contributor to the profit of a business. This is because keeping an existing customer only costs 20% of the cost of attracting a new customer, indicating that a firm's earning can be increased in the range of 15% to 125% with just a 5% growth in returning customer numbers (Silber et al., 2009). According to past research, consumers' repeat purchase or patronage is how food eateries position themselves correctly within the industry and meet consumers' expectation to stand out and survive in this industry (Fraser, Zahari, & Othman, 2008; Ghaz, 2017; Lee et al., 2016). For instance, eateries engage in providing time-saving options, situating in a strategic

location, setting food items at correct prices, and making sure that every customer is happy and satisfied from the dining or purchasing experience (Chan et al., 2014; Chua et al., 2010; Ferrera, 2015; Lee et al., 2016).

The Italian Trade Agency (2018) reported that due to changes in lifestyle, consumers dine out frequently as they lack the extra time to prepare a complete meal at home. The report continued to point out that higher living costs have shifted consumer preferences to food service outlets that provide affordable and convenient food options. As such, restaurateurs are required to identify how consumers' preferences have evolved through changes in lifestyle, demographics, and spending patterns, based on which they should offer various dining options to match market demands (Ghaz, 2017). According to Chan (2014), the price of food is a contributing factor in the success of a food business. It is noted that customers review a menu as good or bad based on the price of the food on the menu (SME Corporation Malaysia, 2018). Moreover, the price factor and convenience factor are the foremost considerations of consumers when they dine out, especially for consumers who are more concerned about saving time (Ghaz, 2017). Aside from time, the location of a food outlet is also an important consideration. It is a common failure reason for an eatery business as the chances of targeting the wrong market is high if it chooses the wrong location to operate in (Lee et al., 2016). Therefore, choosing an appropriate location is helpful in securing the success of a food business (Chan et al., 2014). Certain consumers will still re-patronise a food premise due to the convenient nature of the location, even if they had a bad impression based on previous experience (Chua et al., 2010). Besides time and convenience, bringing pleasure to customers during their purchasing or dining process is also a winning point for a food business' success. According to Ferrera (2015), consumers are far more likely to return to a shop if they are happy with their purchasing or dining experience,

in line with Ghaz's (2017) suggestion that consumers choose to dine out because they want to gain pleasure.

The nature of the food truck business model can fulfil the needs and wants of consumers, as apart from having flexibility and mobility characteristics, it also addresses Malaysians' preference for street food (Arikiah, 2019). The food truck is a fast and convenient food option that is suitable for consumers living the hectic city life; these advantages are a credit to the sustainability of this industry.

However, despite owning features that matches the demand of consumers, this industry is also facing several challenges to sustain in the food market, such as its struggle with food storage handling due to limited working space (Arikiah, 2019). The limited working space does not only restrict food truck entrepreneurs from offering numerous food options on their menu, but also hinders them from storing food properly as they only have a small area to keep ingredients, prepare food, and serve customers. Moreover, the roving concept of food trucks enables them to flee from effective food safety regulations and inspection, revealing that the rate of food contamination from food trucks is high, thus increasing the risk of foodborne disease outbreaks (Auad et al., 2019).

Besides, the image of food trucks differs according to different groups of consumers. According to Lee (2017), local people express that food truck locations, which operate mostly in tourist spots instead of workplaces or areas near public transport, makes it inconvenient and hinders their purchase from food trucks. In addition, the prices of the food items sold from food trucks do not differ much from that of sit-down restaurants, where consumers can enjoy their meals in an air-conditioned area; this is another reason why local consumers have no intention to repeat their purchase from

food trucks (Lee, 2017). Lee (2017) continued to point out that tourists have better perceptions of food trucks as they feel it is a safer option than street food and is considered affordable. Moreover, the fusion flavour of food truck products is more acceptable to tourists compared to completely local-flavoured food (Lee, 2017).

Unfortunately, there is only minimal literature on consumers' perceived risk and benefits and their re-purchase intention towards the food truck industry, particularly in the context of Malaysia. Only a few studies, such as those by Choi et al. (2013) and Yoon and Chung (2018), have explained the relationship between consumers' purchase intention, attitude, perceived risk, and perceived benefit in the food truck setting. From the discussion above, it is clear that perceived risk and perceived benefits are the main determinants of consumers' re-purchase intention towards a food business. However, are these the main predictors of re-purchase intention in the specific context of the food truck industry? What are the constructs of perceived risk and perceived benefits with regard to food trucks? Does consumers' attitude impact their re-purchase intention?

1.3 Problem Statement of the Study

Undoubtedly, the food truck industry is very popular nowadays and has been making its own way as a rising star in the culinary industry, particularly in the western continent (Ibrahim, 2011). However, in Malaysia, this industry is still in the early stage (Wahab et al., 2017). With the identification of certain risks, such as food safety risk and environmental risk, the future of this industry remains unclear and unknown in the context of Malaysia.

In recent years, sourcing food away from home due to lifestyle changes has become a common scenario, especially in urban cities (Loriato & Pelissari, 2017). Consumers seek food that is convenient, fits their budget, and connects them to feelings of excitement and relaxation during the process of food consumption or food purchase (Auad et al., 2019; Burt, Volel, & Finkel, 2003). The food truck shares these attributes as it is a food option deemed to be convenient, affordable, and fashionable; therefore, marketers from the food truck industry see this as an opportunity to provide an alternative food option to consumers who always eat out (Durai, 2016; Ibrahim, 2011; Yunus, 2015). However, the risks associated with this industry makes consumers think twice before purchasing from food trucks, despite the benefits considered by consumers during the selection of a food option (Choi et al., 2013; Solomon, 2010).

The first identified risk is the risk associated with food safety, which is always an important consideration in the determination of consumer behaviour (Mitchell, 1999). Many researchers have acknowledged food safety as a factor that affects consumers' food purchase, as it involves improper food handling practices and hygiene risks that cause food poisoning (Auad et al., 2019; Griffith, 2000; Yoon & Chung, 2018). The next risk identified is environmental risk. Food is deemed convenient when it has the grab-and-go feature, which enables people to consume anytime and anywhere (Shin et al., 2019). As food packaging plays an important role in supporting this feature, the over-usage of plastic and disposable tableware is detrimental to the environment. As a result, consumers may opt to avoid food choices with non-environmentally packaging due to their awareness and responsibility to preserve the environment.

In marketing research, it is always important to understand how consumers' purchase intention and behaviour are formed (Ibrahim, 2011). Food choice is known to be closely associated with quality, meal experience, and price, and products in the food service industry have shorter lifespans under a highly stimulated environment (Johns & Pine, 2002). Repeat purchase intention is what service providers are paying attention to as it signifies that the business can be secured in the long run via the decision of consumers to purchase again in the future following their satisfaction from their previous consumption experience (Jansri, 2015). This will allow marketers to improvise their marketing strategy by knowing which part of their service they should improve.

As the food truck sector is gaining attention in the F&B industry, many scholars have conducted surveys to measure the behavioural intention and food choice of consumers towards food truck purchases. However, there is only scarce evidence on the factors that contribute to food truck re-purchase intention from the perspective of consumers' perceived risks and benefits, especially in the context of Malaysia. It was also observed by Johns and Pine (2002) that although many studies have noted the importance of certain food attributes (e.g., food quality, food price, surrounding environment, location of service, convenience of product) for consumer behaviour, they are still too generalised to be adapted across different types of dining occasions. For instance, consumers weigh food price and convenience as the most important attributes of fast food, but consider the aspects of food ambience and food experience when they dine in high-end restaurants. Therefore, it is crucial to review the exact attributes that influence consumers' re-purchase intention towards food trucks.

In marketing research, it is well-established that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (PBC) are common yet potential variables that drive a consumers' intention to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Although many studies cover these factors in the food industry, scarce research has been conducted to test consumers' re-purchase intention towards food trucks in Malaysia. Therefore, it is important to identify how these variables affect re-purchase intention via their relationships in this study.

Based on the discussion above, it can be seen that both theoretical and practical examinations of the relationship between consumers' perceived risks and benefits and their re-purchase intention are lacking, particularly in the food truck industry in Malaysia. Since there is no sufficient literature on how perceived risks and benefits affect consumers' re-purchase intention towards the food truck industry, this study attempted to fill this gap by investigating how the variables of perceived risk and perceived benefit determine consumers' re-purchase intention. This study is a significant step towards a more complete understanding of consumers' perceived risk, perceived benefit, attitude, subjective norm, PBC, and past experience in the context of food trucks in Malaysia.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the relationship between perceived risk and consumers' attitude towards food trucks.
2. To investigate the relationship between perceived benefits and consumers' attitude towards food trucks.

3. To investigate the relationship between perceived risk and consumers' re-purchase intention towards food trucks.
4. To investigate the relationship between perceived benefits and consumers' re-purchase intention towards food trucks.
5. To investigate the relationship between consumers' attitude and their re-purchase intention towards food trucks.
6. To investigate the relationship between consumers' subjective norms and their re-purchase intention towards food trucks.
7. To investigate the relationship between consumers' PBC and their re-purchase intention towards food trucks.
8. To investigate the mediating effect of consumers' attitude on the relationship between perceived risks and their re-purchase intention towards food trucks.
9. To investigate the mediating effect of consumers' attitude on the relationship between perceived benefits and their re-purchase intention towards food trucks.

1.5 Research Questions

1. Do perceived risks affect consumers' attitude towards food trucks?
2. Do perceived benefits influence consumers' attitude towards food trucks?
3. Do perceived risks affect consumers' re-purchase intention towards food trucks?
4. Do perceived benefits influence consumers' re-purchase intention towards food trucks?

5. Does consumers' attitude affect their re-purchase intention towards food trucks?
6. Do subjective norms affect consumers' re-purchase intention towards food trucks?
7. Does consumers' PBC influence their re-purchase intention towards food trucks?
8. Does consumers' attitude mediate the relationship between perceived risks and their re-purchase intention towards food trucks?
9. Does consumers' attitude mediate the relationship between perceived benefits and their re-purchase intention towards food trucks?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study enabled the researcher to identify the key factors that affect the re-purchase intention of consumers towards food truck services. While recognising that there are potential circumstances when it may not be transformed into behaviour, intention is still the beginning point of the wants and needs of consumers towards a behaviour. Re-purchasing intention, in particular, indicates that people still show interest after the first attempt. Furthermore, it is noted that to acquire a new customer costs five times more than keeping an old customer, meaning that in generating a higher profit, it is more important for businesses to know how to keep old customers by understanding their re-purchase intention (Chang, Chou, & Wen-Chien, 2014). Apart from that, examining consumers' perceived risks and benefits can provide a better understanding of consumers' needs and wants, through which managerial decisions can be planned and made more carefully. Therefore, by identifying the re-

purchase intention of consumers towards food truck services, a better insight and deeper understanding of their behaviour in this field can be attained. This section is segregated into two parts, each of which explains the practical significance and the theoretical significance of this study.

1.6.1 Practical Significance

As elaborated in the earlier part of this section, repeat purchasing is an important phenomenon that marketers or food owners should study. First, from the consumers' perspective, this study grants the public a clearer insight into the food truck industry so they know what to expect from this business and what they will receive in return after consuming the product. The opinions and suggestions collected from this study provide a more concrete idea to the industry as a guideline to follow so that the requirements of their customers are met. In addition, consumers also get the chance to understand themselves on how their previous experiences influence their repeat purchases at food trucks.

Moreover, marketers or food owners will be able to better understand what consumers are looking for and thereby develop marketing strategies based on consumers' needs. From this study, marketers of food trucks can tackle the main concerns about this industry in the consumer decision-making process. They will be able to find ways to lower the risks and increase the benefits perceived by consumers based on the results through strategies such as introducing new menu items, sharing brief nutritional information, adjusting prices, changing packaging, and drafting best-fit business schedules which generate higher sales. This is especially crucial for food

truck operators as it offers recommendations for the business to sustain in the long run. Besides, it is also important to those that aim to maximise their profits from customer retention by focusing on the correct target market. With this, a win-win situation which satisfies both consumers and food providers can be achieved, creating an ideal scenario where there is no gap between the supply side and demand side.

In addition, the government will be able to propose suitable policies from the findings of this research. With the rising demand and supply of food trucks, the government should help marketers by taking initiatives to promote the industry to the community through various ways so that they have more awareness of this industry. In the meantime, the government should also set rules and regulations to control the industry so that consumers' benefits consumers are secured. For instance, SME Corporation Malaysia can draft a more suitable operations guideline for food trucks from the result of this study, while the Ministry of Tourism can launch events involving the participation of food trucks based on the understanding of consumer needs pertaining food trucks. As food trucks are a hit with their growing popularity and great potential in the F&B sector, the findings of this study thus provide the government clearer insights and suggestions on ways to expand and improve this industry.

1.6.2 Theoretical Significance