

An Analysis of Malaysian Halal Street Food Vendors' Service Quality

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Abstract

Eating food that's ready to eat is part of Malaysian culture. Street food vendors need to understand their customers' always demands and provide them with high-quality satisfaction to succeed. However, because of its widespread appeal, there is still uncertainty about the food's safety and potential problems. Thus, the significance of this topic lies in examining how Muslim consumers perceive the quality of service when purchasing halal street food vendors, gauging their awareness of halal fraud when making food choices, and identifying the street food traders' service quality policies regarding halal street food vendors in connection to food safety. Data analysis and gathering techniques are used in this study. This study's efforts to gather data and information are based on library research from primary and secondary sources, including books, journals, hadiths, the Qur'an, and scientific writing. Three strategies are used to analyse these data: comparative, deductive, and inductive. The main findings discuss Muslim customers' awareness of halal fraud in food selection, the assessment of service quality in relation to purchasing halal street food vendors, and the policies of street food vendors addressing halal vendors with respect to food safety. When it comes to halal consumption, customers are starting to place a greater emphasis on cleanliness and safety. Knowledge empowers Muslim consumers to make informed choices and avoid purchasing phoney or non-halal products. By helping them find reliable vendors and halal-certified products, it protects their dietary and religious needs. In general, halal food fraud knowledge is crucial for upholding Muslim customers' rights, encouraging honesty in the halal food sector, and building consumer and company trust. It is important to acknowledge that halal has evolved into more than just a religious issue; it is now a way of life and a representation of worldwide quality control. It is advised to do additional research utilising questionnaires and interviews to learn more about how Muslim consumers perceive the level of service provided by halal street food sellers in order to get more precise information.

Keywords: Halal Street, Food Vendors, Service, Quality

Introduction

Food made quickly and sold to clients in takeout containers on the streets is referred to as street food (Hanan et al., 2021). Street food is common sight in most towns and cities in many developing nations. Due to its low cost, ease of access, vast selection, and convenience, street food is growing in popularity. Street vendors provide easy access to a wide range of products and services in public areas of cities across the globe, including anything from prepared food to fresh produce, materials, apparel, and crafts to consumer electronics, vehicle parts, and repairs (Chang et al., 2020).

Street food in Malaysia has the potential to draw tourists. It provides a range of regional cuisine and drinks that showcase the diverse culinary customs of Malaysia's multicultural populace. It has always been a custom for Malaysians to love street food. Malaysians often select other meal options over home-cooked meals because of their changing lifestyle and increased social, professional, and familial responsibilities. This helps the already-popular street food gain even more traction.

According to a prior study, a significant portion of food-borne illness cases have been linked to improper food handling practices in street food. The hardest challenge for street food sellers is upholding the strictest standards of hygiene and cleanliness for the meals they sell. Research on street food has also examined the circumstances surrounding food production and storage, as well as the relationship between food and general public health (Shafiee et al., 2018).

In Malaysia, a Muslim nation, finding and obtaining halal food is easy. Since the food service industry is built on quality, evaluation is crucial to keeping a competitive edge and driving the Malaysian economy. Malaysia is well-positioned to rise to the top of the halal business in its home country. Although halal food is portrayed as healthy and delicious, still many questions and concerns remain about it (Ibrahim & Othman, 2014). According to a study on street food, customers thought there were no minimum food manufacturing requirements to protect consumers' health. The study also demonstrates the necessity of heightened government regulation of this type of transaction with regard to hygienic requirements. An earlier investigation into the circumstances surrounding the sale of street food at open-air festivals found that vendors' frequent handling of food and money contributed to poor cleanliness (Hanan et al., 2021).

A video that went viral in 2018 and revealed filthy restaurants and unsanitary practices by a few restaurants located in various regions outraged Malaysians. People are thus starting to pay closer attention to the restaurants they choose. In contrast, many people were incensed in 2019 when a video of Malaysian restaurant staff washing dishes in a murky puddle in a back alley went viral. People today are, therefore, very conscious of what they consume and very concerned about it (Hanan et al., 2021). Recognising how customers view the many vital components of street food operations is essential for businesses to thrive in this very competitive market. Muslim consumers' awareness of products and food on the market shapes their perceptual and cognitive reactions to them (Ambali & Bakar, 2014).

Nevertheless, over a billion people worldwide continue to eat daily meals from street sellers despite this disconcerting tangible evidence of the food's safety (Hanan et al., 2021). This led to an investigation of the primary standards by which customers choose street food vendors they think are trustworthy. Today's organisations need to make an effort to ensure quality breakthroughs and continuous improvement to meet the expectations and needs. It is commonly believed that raising the quality of services is crucial in the highly competitive climate of the service business. This is particularly advantageous for companies that offer

food services, as attracting and retaining consumers typically depends on offering top-notch customer service (Ibrahim & Othman, 2014).

Literature Review

The Concept of Halal

The notion of halal is based on the five points mentioned in the Maqasid Syariah: money, intelligence, life, religion, and posterity. It is not based on the purity of forbidden commodities or halal. All things considered, the word halal describes actions or the utilisation of objects that satisfy human needs and are meant to be secure, wholesome, and in accordance with Shariah regulations. The word halal has been mentioned in the al-Quran in reference to Muamalat, marital issues, family issues, food, and other matters. However, halal is most commonly used in regard to food and earning a living (Zaini & Yoyo, 2021). The concept of halal originated with Quranic verse 168 in surah *al-Baqarah* which translates to

Oh people! Avoid following satan's path and only consume what is good and lawful on earth. He really is your declared adversary.

The Arabic term *halal* means permitted or legal. Upholding the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad and the teachings of the al-Quran is a must for every Muslim. One of them is a set of dietary rules. Muslims are required by his mandate to consume only halal food and abstain from haram food. In actuality, what are haram and halal? The Arabic word *halal* means lawful, licit, lawful, legitimate, allowable, permitted, permissible, admissible, and unprohibited, meaning that food consumed by Muslims is either lawful or permissible unless it is stated explicitly as haram or forbidden in the al-Quran and hadith. Islam and halal food go hand in hand because Islamic laws and regulations govern Muslim habits and religious beliefs. A set of dietary recommendations for food consumption is one of the criteria for guaranteeing optimal health. Islam mentions these laws in the al-Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (Ahmad et al., 2013).

The al-Quran has numerous verses, such as those found in surahs *al-Maidah*, *al-A'raf*, and *al-An'am*, that advise Muslims on maintaining a healthy lifestyle and diet. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad SAW also gave his disciples the mandate to consistently draw attention to halal food issues (Othman et al., 2019). In a Hadith recounted by Anas bin Malik, the Prophet Muhammad SAW stated

Muslims have an obligation to seek halal.

These writings discuss the maintenance of an individual's bodily and spiritual well-being and how to do so. This serves as a reminder to remember Allah SWT's admonition and advice only to eat healthful, pure foods. Apart from that, several verses in the al-Quran employ the Arabic word *tayyib* to describe healthful meals. In addition to meaning good, the Arabic word *tayyib* also means pure, clean, wholesome, and nourishing. If someone eats non-tayyib foods that cause them to lose control over their bodies and brains, they will not thrive.

Not only must the ingredients be halal, but from the time the dish is produced until it is served, it must be handled properly and hygienically. Studies have shown that a large number of food-borne illness cases are caused by improper food handling due to poor personal hygiene among food handlers. Since street food is an off-premise outlet or open space, there is no proper wash basin drainage and sewage system, and the foods are also exposed to flies

and stray animals that scavenge for leftover food. Street food vendors must use *halalan toyyiban* food handling procedures to foster a positive image of Muslims and Muslim nations that understand and apply the teachings of Islam. In addition, many of the meals that are sold come in big portions, have many calories, and are high in sugar, salt, trans fats, and saturated fat. Even while street food is more nutrient-dense than ever, obesity is still a significant public health concern in this country. Second, most vendors exhibit inadequate food hygiene and safety measures, which the health authorities must address to protect the public from microbial contamination.

According to a prior survey, there is still a low degree of *halalan toyyiban* awareness about food safety among street food vendors in Malaysia, especially among Muslims. Some Muslim street food vendors operate their eateries and food booths in unhygienic and improper locations, ignoring the *toyyiban* features and serving Halal cuisine. It is diametrically opposed to the teachings of Muslims regarding *halalan toyyiban* (Shafiee et al., 2018).

Halal Food Consumption

Since eating halal food is required by Islam, having halal food available in the market is essential for Muslim consumers. Muslim shoppers will utilise and rely on the halal emblem to help them choose what to eat. However, because the halal market is so profitable in today's modern world, some people might misuse the halal certification and logo. As a result, some patrons are picking their meals with greater caution.

Because halal cuisine is produced and managed by all ethnic groups in Malaysia, locally and globally, customers must be aware of it. Muslims search for the halal certification and logo on food packaging, signage, or restaurants while making meal selections. Applying a halal logo and certification in Malaysia depends on their request. Those with a halal certification and logo benefit from increased market access, as 60.4% of Malaysians identify as Muslims (Ahmad et al., 2013).

Furthermore, Muslims in Malaysia depend on a variety of factors in addition to only eating halal food, such as the climate, accessibility, taste, and cost. The price is one of the main factors that could affect someone's dining choice. Every customer may have a different income bracket, which could influence the foods they choose. Previous research supports the idea that a person's food preferences or tastes may influence how much food they eat and what products they select. However, people may become less concerned with pricing as their money rises.

Several factors impact food intake by customers, such as the availability of halal food, food safety, quality, and hygiene. Muslims place a high value on halal cuisine, and as globalisation has raised knowledge of its consumption, so too has its consumption. The previous author defined food safety as the antithesis of food risk, which is the possibility that a person will not encounter risks due to eating a certain meal. Food safety is concerned with the food's preparation level and consumption safety. Ensuring the production of food that is safe for human consumption is crucial for all food production facilities. It is also crucial to practise proper food cleanliness to prevent food poisoning. Food hygiene refers to handling and storing food properly as well as maintaining clean facilities, staff, and equipment. When preparing food, the risk of illness should be as low as possible. Regarding food hygiene, consumer lifestyle and concerns about food safety and cleanliness are also important. To produce goods that are wholesome and fit for consumption, food manufacturers need to follow proper food hygiene practices. When purchasing, consumers usually consider food quality and safety instead of food cleanliness (Ahmad et al., 2013).

Advertising, reviews, social media, public relations, personal experience, and other things often influenced perceptions of products. The selection of food goods by consumers is impacted by their attitudes, which are linked to intricate religious convictions, as well as life experiences. According to earlier research, a person's view of social influences influences their decision to act in a specific way. Food safety and quality are two essential considerations in consumers' perceptions and decision-making while selecting foods. Food choices made by consumers are becoming more complex (Ruslan et al., 2018).

Halal Food Fraud Awareness

To respect their religious beliefs and adhere to their dietary restrictions, Muslims need to be informed about halal problems. Additionally, it is essential for businesses, particularly those in the food industry, to be aware of and knowledgeable about halal standards in order to serve and accommodate Muslim clients appropriately. By raising consumer understanding of halal issues, Muslims and non-Muslims can create and purchase halal goods. Businesspeople refer to the use of a halal procedure in product production as having halal knowledge (Ali & Ahmad, 2023).

If entrepreneurs wish to highlight halal as an essential component, they must ensure that *halalan toyyiban* is present in the product. Numerous studies have shown that customer knowledge of *halalan toyyiban* items positively effected choices and enterprises. It is also said that awareness of halal is influenced by knowledge about halal. Muslims need to be informed about halal problems in order to maintain their religious principles and follow their dietary restrictions. Businesses, particularly those in the food industry, must educate themselves on halal standards to properly interact with and serve Muslim clients. Since knowledgeable consumers are more inclined to buy and consume halal items, both Muslims and non-Muslims can manufacture them.

Awareness means a person's experience, perception, and emotional response to a particular thing or event. People's thoughts, feelings, and perspectives about the circumstances and the information are considered. To thoroughly comprehend the halal concept, one must first examine how people approach and perceive it. Customers and businesses alike need to be aware of halal standards. The majority of Muslim consumers utilise the halal label. However, multiple incidents of fraud and improper usage of the mark have, which has caused mistrust among the general population. A halal mark on a menu item does not imply that the dish is halal. It is challenging for customers to tell if a food is halal (Ali & Ahmad, 2023).

A recent study (Bakhtiar et al., 2021) found that a various factors, including religious belief, self-identification, halal certificate, and awareness, affect people's awareness of halal items. Another source claims that exposure, religious decrees, the importance of the halal certification seal, and health-related worries are some of the reasons behind the spike in demand for halal products. Other research indicates that the primary determinants of consumer preference when purchasing processed food that has been certified as halal in contemporary retailers are customer attitudes affected by halal awareness and locations. A different study claims that elements including cost, quality, and the presence of a halal label can affect what people decide to purchase.

Fraud pertaining to halal food is a sensitive and serious issue for Muslim customers. It was discovered that there was a significant chance of halal and haram products getting contaminated with one another in a few cases. Circumstances in which non-halal and halal meats are kept together in storage. The Directorate of Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection

Service (MAQIS) reportedly intercepted a cargo of frozen meats stored together in Malaysia and classified as halal and non-halal. Adulterating halal meat can take many forms due to complex food supply networks. The previous author claims that cases of meat adulteration involve not only altering the ingredients but also mislabeling items from the nation of origin and killing animals in violation of the Syariah law, a subject of debate in the halal food sector. According to a different author, determining if a food item is halal can be difficult when it is processed or pre-packaged.

Muslim customers in Malaysia generally do not buy food products from establishments that have not been certified halal by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM). However, some dishonest manufacturers abuse the halal food industry by using unauthorised or unlicensed halal insignia on the packaging of their goods. In other cases, non-Muslim producers would label their goods with imaginary Islamic brand names or symbols in an attempt to win over Muslim customers' confidence and attention. Additionally, several restaurant owners surreptitiously employed Arabic characters or passages from the Quran to entice Muslim patrons to their establishments (Ruslan et al., 2018).

A poll found that Muslims are more likely to buy phoney halal food items since there are no Islamic authorities to police the legislation consistently and because Muslims are not well-informed about halal (Ibrahim & Mokhtarudin, 2010). According to a previous study (Yusoff & Adzharuddin, 2017), one of the main problems is an individual's lack of awareness due to subjective aspects like value, religious devotion, consumer attitude, information processing, or external ones like environmental culture. Understanding halal products among Muslim consumers is essential for persuading the halal industry's players to produce food items that comply with Islamic law (Ruslan et al., 2018).

The concept of *halalan toyyiban* is important for Muslims to understand since something needs to be halal in addition to being good and safe. Eating halal, wholesome, pure, and clean meals will boost one's taqwa and the value of their devotion. The food Muslims eat also affects their capacity to pray. If the food comes from unreliable or illegal sources, Allah SWT would not hear their prayers. This is the degree to which Allah SWT has required us to take halal awareness seriously (Shafiee et al., 2018).

Aspect of Halal Food Requirement Practices

Kotler and Keller suggest that the product features should align with the needs and preferences of customers, serving as a key competitive advantage when distinctive, appealing qualities are incorporated (Summary Principles Marketing, n.d.). Moreover, the strength of a product is conveyed through its attributes, allowing companies to differentiate their offerings from those of competitors (Chai, 2019).

Consumers increasingly prefer nutritious, wholesome foods, with a wide variety available that vary in flavor, processing, packaging, and presentation. Attention to food safety and hygiene is also growing among consumers. Implementing Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) systems in food manufacturing can mitigate the risk of foodborne illnesses.

For Muslim consumers, adherence to food safety and cleanliness standards alone is not enough; food must also be halal. This includes all aspects of production, from raw materials to processing, packaging, storage, transportation, distribution, and retailing, ensuring safety and compliance with halal standards (Ahmad et al., 2013). The Malaysian government is encouraged to adopt the Malaysian Standard MS 1500:2019 for halal certification, alongside

MS 1480:2019 and MS 1514:2022, which focus on food safety and hygiene, to address these needs comprehensively.

Food Safety and Hygiene

The values of *halalan toyyiban* give security and hygiene top importance. Another study supported this hypothesis that food safety and quality cannot be compromised during production. This is particularly important when handling premium food products. Furthermore, it entails adhering to specific acceptable standards, gaining knowledge, and applying them. The business's certificates in Malaysia may be suspended as a result. In fact, under the Food Act of 1983, Food Regulations of 1985, and Food Hygiene Regulation of 2009, the Ministry of Health (MOH) may, if found guilty, take severe measures, including the compulsory closure of facilities and other measures (Othman et al., 2019).

Ingredients

The primary criterion used to determine if something is *toyyib* or halal is its ingredients. According to Othman et al (2019), a raw material is a basic material altered from its original state or has undergone some processing. It has been used as an input into the production process to modify the finished product. Ensuring a substance is not forbidden by Islamic law, such as faeces or harmful or toxic compounds mixed with it, is necessary before determining whether it is legal or prohibited.

Equipment and Utensils

Also, the employment of tools and utensils is intricately tied to using halal-compliant products. The Department of Standard Malaysia has underlined that, in accordance with MS 1500:2019, all machinery, tools, and processing aids used in the production of halal food must be made with simpler cleaning in mind. It must not contain any substances declared unlawful by Islamic law, and it should only be used to create halal meals. Further support is provided by the MS, which stipulates that any equipment, supplies, or processing aids that have come into contact with or been used on *najs mughallazah* must be ritually cleaned in compliance with Islamic law (Othman et al., 2019).

Packaging

Packaging is the art of using something to cover any object. Anything made of materials that will be used to store, arrange, or safeguard anything from raw ingredients to final goods to customers is referred to as packaging. A study claims that packaging is an essential part of logistical elements, but it focuses on the halal problem in order to avoid cross-contamination. This is offered in the form of a box, container, or other item. The safety and hygiene of a product do not indicate that it is halal. It is important to consider the basic ingredients, which include gelatin, oil, and fat. When considering Malaysia's halal certification, the role of packaging becomes more intricate. The ingredients used in the production are halal and devoid of any substances that are legally forbidden. Packaging functions as a covering and a protective substance. Additionally, it conforms with Malaysia's halal rules, which stipulate that every package needs to be labelled with the information mandated by the act and the applicable standard in a clear, durable manner (Othman et al., 2019).

Storage

A material that is either present in raw materials, semi-finished products, or stored finished goods is highlighted by halal and *toyyib* certification. The purpose of the storage procedure is to keep the parts from getting combined and being utilised to store a product with other chemicals. The main objective is to stop food from getting contaminated by chemicals that are classified as either halal or haram, as well as by other objects such as motor dust, plastic, glass, or metal shards (Othman et al., 2019).

Processing

The products are viewed as halal and *toyyib* or otherwise in an organisation or the premises from the time the raw materials are received to the point where the finished product is produced. At the processing stage, inspectors will verify that the materials are safe, hygienic, authentically halal, and free of any components or materials that are forbidden. Malaysia's halal certification further states that it is against the law to put a religious object or instrument in the processing area. If this is not done, the halal certificate should be cancelled, and the authorities can enforce the fallacy (Othman et al., 2019). Any other haram produce should not contaminated the halal, and the processing should follow the Syariah concept.

Transportation

Every vehicle used by companies, owners, or other stakeholders must also be hygienic inside and out. This ensures that the products are safe and in good condition (Othman et al., 2019). Moreover, it is uncontaminated by anything unclean or najis.

Street Food Vendors Food Service

The main reason for consumers' growing reliance on street food is their sense of its worth. Perceived value is the entire assessment of what is offered and received. What customers consider advantages varies, with the two main factors being quality and pricing, both in terms of money and non-money. This value for street food includes the fair price patrons pay for the significant quantity, the value they receive for their money in terms of food and service, and the time and labour needed to get the food (Chang et al., 2020).

Food handlers need to pay more attention to the halal products' food, beverages, and service because consumers are growing pickier and expecting better quality from their products. A previous study found that the production and processing of halal food are based on quality, sanitary, and safety factors and are crucial procedures for food items and trade in Malaysia. This suggests that the products and services used for the property's exterior and interior must closely follow Syariah laws. This significantly affects customers' intention to purchase.

Halal food service, sometimes referred to as *halalan toyyiban*, is the serving of food and beverages that adhere to the principles of Sharia, or Islamic law. This type of food is acceptable and fit for ingestion. The production of food, from the farm, where animals are killed, to the food service sector, where food preparation and presentation are involved, is the focus of *halalan toyyiban*. Sharia, for example, mandates that ingredients support proper cleanliness and be devoid of alcohol and pork. Although prior studies primarily addressed mentality or buying intentions and generally dealt with halal items, their reach was sometimes restricted. Given that the scope of the halal business encompasses services such as halal restaurants, research into Muslim consumers' perceptions of service quality is necessary (Saaidin et al., 2018).

Food Safety Knowledge

Information someone with comprehension and ability is aware of is referred to as knowledge. A person's belief system is based on their trust. Halalness is assessed as a means of determining its worth. The government needs to educate the public about halal because most people do not know or are unaware of the existence of food products with the halal mark, especially those in Muslim religious communities.

The research on consumers' perceptions of food safety is incredibly complex. The prior study found that consumers' perceptions of food safety are influenced by the degree of risk they have personally encountered. Other research indicates that concerns and worry may also influence how consumers see the safety of their food. Islamic belief holds that halal food is hygienic and secure. Based on the principle of halal, jurisprudence has decided that food containing anything that can hurt consumers is not allowed to be consumed. Food safety is highly valued in halal products. However, some issues pertaining to the halal logo and food producers who disregard the religious sensitivities of Muslims have raised doubts about the halal logo's legitimacy (Zaini & Yoyo, 2021).

According to the earlier study, consumers are willing to pay more for food safety features even when their preferences vary. A commitment is one of two crucial characteristics that also influence consumer behaviour. According to the previous study, food safety and enough nutrition are necessities, and customers' views of these issues impact their purchasing intentions. These concerns are essential for developing a healthy eating lifestyle and preventing sickness (Bakhtiar et al., 2021).

The selling of street food is vital to the economies of rich and developing countries, yet questions remain over its safety and quality. Food illness caused by street food is still a risk in many parts of the world. The filthy and subpar conditions in which street foods are prepared or sold are often mentioned as significant factors, in addition to the food vendors' lack of experience in food preparation and handling. Numerous studies have demonstrated that most street food vendors do not wash their hands properly. A few traits connected to inadequate food safety and hygiene practices are ignorance about food safety, a pessimistic outlook, and education (Jores et al., 2018).

Since most street food consumers rely on the vendors to cook and prepare their food, their cleanliness standards directly impact them. On the other side, due to its limited accessibility, customers feel that street food poses a severe risk to food safety. Customers believe that there are several significant risks associated with the safety of street food, including improper food storage, inadequate personal hygiene, contaminated raw and processed food, improper heating and reheating techniques, improper cooking techniques, the use of hazardous substances and food additives that are forbidden, and the distribution and sale of products that have passed their expiration date (Chang et al., 2020).

Food safety demands policies and procedures that control how a food establishment operates to produce clean, safe food for human consumption. In addition to adhering to international standards for good manufacturing and hygiene practices, the Malaysian Standard on Halal Food MS 1500:2019 provides the food industry with practical guidelines for handling and preparing halal food that consider quality, hygiene, and safety. It is a basic prerequisite for the trade or business of food items in Malaysia. Because of this, the previous study's author also states that the al-Quran employs halal and healthy dietary standards, or *halalan toyyiban* in Arabic, for assuring halal and clean food.

Attributes of Service Quality

Understanding the key factors consumers consider when evaluating a service or product is vital for gaining insights into consumer behavior. These factors directly impact perceptions of overall quality. Research suggests that quality is a standard formed by consumers both before and after their purchase and use of a product. It has been noted that consumer perceptions of product quality are important, regardless of whether the context is street commerce for indoor or outdoor meals. Consumers base their judgments of final quality on their initial expectations and the actual performance of the product (Hanan et al., 2021).

Numerous studies have identified the physical environment, personnel service, and food quality as the three main components of service quality. For this study, it was possible to quantify the physical environment and staff service because the SERVQUAL instruments had relevant dimensions that address these areas. The previous author emphasised the importance of food quality as a gauge of customer satisfaction in the food industry. The many aspects of service quality and the relationship between perceived value, service quality, and customer satisfaction were examined in a different study. It was determined that consumer satisfaction was significantly and favourably impacted by meal quality.

As several studies conducted over the years in various settings have shown, service is crucial to ensuring the survival and growth of a food service business. Regardless of the product or service they are looking for, clients have expectations for the quality of the service they receive, according to the writers.

A multitude of characteristics, including flavour, temperature, portion size, menu diversity, and nutritional content, are taken into consideration by consumers when assessing the quality of food. The author keeps emphasising how, in the context of eateries generally, patrons' primary consideration when selecting a restaurant is the calibre of the cuisine. Given that food has historically been restaurants' primary selling point, this is especially true. The results are consistent with earlier research, which listed food quality as one of the many factors that matter to eateries. It is highlighted that food quality may have a greater impact than other elements like the environment and the quality of the service (Majid et al., 2018).

When it comes to purchasing a product, one of the factors that greatly influences the decision and choice of the consumer is pricing. Customers' intention to buy a certain product may depend on whether they think a pricing is high or low. Customers usually keep track of and compare the prices they pay to those of other customers and the prices charged by their food sellers to ensure that they are treated fairly. This is due to the fact that equity affects consumers' perceptions, which in turn affects their inclination to buy.

Aside from that, one of the initial impressions that clients have of a firm is its physical location. The physical surrounds of an establishment have an impact on customers' perceptions of its quality. For example, the area around street food sellers is clean; it is devoid of trash, sewerage, bathrooms, open drains, and animals. The customer experience can be further enhanced by combining concrete components like lighting, music, temperature, and scent with ethereal ones like signage, symbols, and decor. Consumers expect delight, pleasure, and excitement from the street food operation's lovely surroundings, but they also expect the state of the preparation area, the aspect of the business that is most evident right away to be more crucial (Chang et al., 2020).

A related study indicates that a business that maintains a high level of sanitation and cleanliness has a greater chance of drawing in new clients and retaining existing ones. Furthermore, a number of researchers examined the importance of cleanliness and concluded that it should take precedence above aesthetics, colour, and even the design's age-

appropriateness. Modern consumers are not just more astute; they also possess a sizeable number of money to spend and choose establishments that provide excellent service and are tidy and clean. When people do not have to worry about clutter, health issues, or anything else that keeps a location clean, they will spend their money. Customers' curiosity might also be sparked by the arrangement at the vendors, the cuisine given, and the service provided by the sellers. One of the most important characteristics that is constantly considered while purchasing things is cleanliness (Hanan et al., 2021).

The well-known Muslim country of Malaysia has tried hard to promote halal. The demand for halal food items is mostly driven by the affluence of Muslim consumers. The preceding author states that halal food products and services need to be produced in an atmosphere that is safe for consumers and does not pose a risk to human health (Ruslan et al., 2018). Furthermore, products produced with halal methods will be of a greater calibre than those produced with only conventional guidelines. Muslims purchase halal food more frequently because of its superior appearance, flavour, variety, labelling, safety, accessibility, quality, and availability (Ali & Ahmad, 2023). According to Nur Aniza et al. (2013), halal covers every aspect of the food supply chain in addition to personal hygiene, attire, utensils, and working conditions. It extends beyond the meal ingredients and components found in restaurants. According to Soong (2007), the finished halal food must meet high standards for all patrons and be hygienic, secure, maintained, and presented beautifully.

The main goals of providing exceptional customer service are to go above and beyond expectations, answer questions, and treat clients with respect. Previous studies have shown that offering services involves interacting directly with customer support agents and, when done well, starts to build relationships based on trust. In reality, 75% of consumers did inform others about their positive brand experiences, according to the same survey. Sixty percent of people think that customer service is more important than pricing when making a purchase. The greatest factor impacting a consumer's confidence in a business is providing exceptional customer service. Customers expect a certain level of reciprocity from the restaurants they frequent, which is reflected in the form of excellent service. Occasionally, these attributes even outweigh customers' concerns that they may become sick from questionable standards of quality set by some proprietors of street food vendors. Examples of this great service include the merchants' behaviour, politeness, and meticulous attention to detail (Hanan et al., 2021).

Challenges Among Street Food Vendors

The street food business was unfairly criticised because of inadequate sanitation and tainted food. Because the street food shop is located near to a drainage system on the sidewalk, it is difficult to maintain sufficient hygiene and sanitation (Shafiee et al., 2018). Additionally, the facilities provided hinder the business's ability to run effectively (Hussain & Dawood, 2020). This claim is supported by a large number of prior investigations. Street food is vulnerable to insects and stray animals who rummage for leftover food since it is served in an off-premise outlet or open space without a sufficient wash basin drainage and sewage system. Prior studies on street food have mostly concentrated on the issues of food contamination and inadequate personal hygiene practices among food workers (Shafiee et al., 2018).

Due to a number of factors, street food vendors and their helpers are generally compelled to adhere to *halalan toyyiban*-based safe food handling practices. They lack the necessary manpower, facilities, and appropriate venues to implement *halalan toyyiban* processes. To aid street food vendors in overcoming challenges and implementing *halalan*

toyyiban-based proper food handling practices. The local authorities can make decisions on how to support vendors by teaching and practicing food safety and hygiene requirements, as well as cleanliness and standardisation of food handling to overcome obstacles

Conclusion

The study's conclusions emphasise the value of quality procedures in customer service, specifically the necessity of food safety procedures to guarantee the calibre and hygienic standards of the food that is supplied. A few recommendations are provided based on this study to make sure people are more aware about halal food. It is crucial to raise knowledge and understanding among Muslims since doing so will change how everyone views halal food. For example, the relevant department can organise presentations concerning valid halal certification and the standards associated with the process of producing certified halal items, in addition to holding halal food exhibitions. As a result, the community will become more interested in learning more about the topic of halal cuisine as a result of these successful programmes. It will help the community and improve people's lives inadvertently. They can differentiate more detailed information from programmes that have been offered to improve their awareness and comprehension. Therefore, Muslim families in today's culture must also do their part to educate their family members so that a positive perception of halal food can be easily acquired.

Apart from that, the government agencies, particularly JAKIM, are among the entities that must fulfil their assigned duties. This is a result of the growing number of halal-related problems, like halal fraud. As a result, the legislation must be effectively enforced and prioritised. As a result, when the appropriate action is taken by the authorities, fraudulent issues with halal won't develop because customers will be encouraged to make informed decisions and report any food safety concerns they come across. Furthermore, in order to remove any questionable concerns and confusion that may develop, the government and connected parties must consider the factors that influence customers' perception and awareness of halal. Furthermore, the government ought to be in charge of creating and implementing rules and laws for food safety. Maintaining public health and making sure food handlers follow the strictest food safety regulations are made possible by regular inspections, investigations, and training and education programmes. The obligations placed on government bodies to ensure food safety among food handlers have several benefits that support consumer confidence, public health, and societal well-being in general.

In addition, it is imperative that all Muslims participate in the promotion of halal goods. The goal is to appeal to a larger segment of the Muslim consumer market, which has several benefits such as expanding market reach, gaining customer trust, improving reputation, and conforming to ethical and religious standards. The prominent display of halal certification marks on product packaging and marketing materials facilitates the identification of halal products by Muslim consumers. The accreditation fosters trust and offers guarantee of adherence to halal standards. Aside from that, Muslim customers might be successfully reached by running focused digital marketing initiatives. To interact with the target audience and promote halal products, for instance, email marketing, influencer collaborations, and social media platforms can be employed. In order to draw in and keep customers' positive opinions about halal products, the food sector and the media must employ specialised marketing techniques. Product marketing will also affect consumers' perceptions when they make purchase decisions and aid in persuading consumers to buy halal goods or even the

wider public. Therefore, it is crucial to promote halal products in order to guarantee that Muslims and the general public have positive opinions about and confidence in halal goods.

The study's findings demonstrate how Muslim customers' perceptions of the quality of the food, surroundings, cleanliness, and halal characteristics offered by halal street food sellers affect Muslims' decisions to buy and eat. The characteristics of service quality are crucial factors that influence how customers view and experience services in general. Street food sellers' service quality is determined by a number of both tangible and intangible elements. Customers' trust and faith in the food they are served is influenced by several tangible features, including cleanliness, hygiene, and food safety protocols. The notion of service quality has a direct bearing on the success and reputation of halal street food sellers. Muslim consumers who are happy with a vendor's offerings grow to be devoted supporters, bringing in more revenue.

Furthermore, there are serious hazards and difficulties associated with halal food fraud for Muslim customers as well as the halal sector overall. The fight against halal food fraud heavily depends on raising consumer awareness. Muslim customers are better equipped to make decisions when they are enlightened about the significance of looking for halal-certified items and the ins and outs of the halal certification procedure. The problem of halal food fraud necessitates cooperation from a range of parties, including consumers, industry participants, halal certification organisations, and government agencies. Fighting halal food fraud helps to create a more truthful, open, and welcoming marketplace for all customers while also protecting religious and cultural identities.

Finally, halal street food vendors must adhere to strict food safety regulations in order to preserve the health and welfare of their Muslim patrons in addition to meeting halal regulations. The trust and confidence that these vendors earn from their customers by enforcing strict food safety regulations is crucial to their business. The risk of food contamination and food-borne illnesses is considerably decreased when food safety regulations are followed. The likelihood of hazardous infections getting into the food that vendors sell is reduced when they place a high priority on hygiene, sanitation, and safe food handling. They may guarantee the authenticity of their halal offers, safeguard the welfare of their clients, and establish a respectable and long-lasting company in the halal food industry by continuously maintaining high food safety standards.

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