

Mobile Eateries SMEs: Occidentals & Malaysia Chronicles

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Abstract

Malaysia might be described as a gourmet paradise, given the distinctiveness of its food, beverages, and food cultures. This article aims to explore the various literature on mobile eateries development in the global and Malaysian context. Thus, we investigate small and medium enterprise and mobile eateries' evolution, roles, and contributions in gastronomic tourism. Gastronomy encompasses an appreciation for diverse social, cultural, and historical components and literature, philosophy, economics, and religion, which revolve around food. We examined online and offline secondary sources of academic and non-academic reports, articles, images, and illustrations. The comparison was made on mobile eateries concept, growth, and development in global and Malaysia context. This article found the various ideas of mobile eateries, including hawkers, street food vendors, and food trucks, that significantly contributed to the holistic gastronomy concept in the global and Malaysian context as a food paradise. Mobile eateries in Malaysia also continue to grow and have significant contributions to the national socio-economic growth in Malaysia.

Keywords:

SMEs, F&B, Mobile Eateries, Food Truck, Gastronomy

1 Introduction

Undoubtedly, gastronomic tourism is becoming one of the most well-known in hospitality, tourism, and culinary fields of study. However, little research and attention are given to the body of literature of mobile eateries' narrative and development globally and locally. Thus, this article develops an understanding of mobile eateries' evolution, roles, and contributions in gastronomic tourism. In particular, this article examines the Small Medium Enterprise (SME) F&B growth and mobile eateries' history, development, and their contribution to Malaysia's food culture and tourism industry. This article also contributes to empowering knowledge for academic and industry players in the gastronomic tourism industry.

Previously, in the national economy, hawkers and petty traders were identified as an essential group that plays a vital role in the country's socioeconomics and helps the communities in urban and rural areas reduce their cost of living (Samad, 2016). Metropolitan cities benefit from the convenience of mobile restaurants, food vendors and hawkers, and food trucks, all of which are referred to as mobile eateries. Mobile eateries do not only refer to modern and urban business concepts that prepare and sell food from the inside of motor vehicles such as food trucks and trailers. Besides, mobile eateries also embrace the notion of hawkers and street food vendors who sell ready-made dishes to customers who move from one place to another and create casual meetings and a sense of place. They form and build this place together, giving it a distinct appearance and feel (Backhaus, 2015). These mobile eateries have in common that they seek out proximity locations to their clients to compete with restaurants and survive.

2 Malaysia SMEs and F&B Industry Overview

The Malaysian economy continued to demonstrate considerable resilience in multiple headwinds by registering a moderate growth of 4.7% in 2018 (2017: 5.7%) (SME Corp, 2019). In addition, the diversified characteristics and performance of SMEs have enhanced their resilience. Still, they have resulted in a higher contribution to the economy in 2019 despite the challenging economic environment (SME Corp, 2021). According to the Malaysia Department of Statistics (DoSM) (2020), Malaysia's SMEs GDP only grew at 5.8% compared to 6.2% in 2018. The contribution of SMEs to GDP increased to 38.9% from 38.3% in the previous year. In addition, Malaysian SME's services are constantly growing and contribute to the national 2019 GDP. According to DoSM (2020), the services sector continuously dominated SMEs activities with 63.3%, followed by the Manufacturing sector at 19.8%; the Agriculture sector contributed 9.7%, Construction and Mining and Quarrying sectors contributed 5.6% and 0.5%, respectively.

However, in 2020, the growth of SMEs' GDP registered at a negative 7.3%, which is lower than Malaysia's GDP for the first time over the past 17 years since 2003 (DoSM, 2021), mainly due to the health crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused numerous impacts on the global socio-economic environment, affecting the business communities, particularly SMEs that struggle for

survival (Hu & Kee, 2021). There are multiple ways in which the coronavirus pandemic affects the economy, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, on both the supply and demand sides. On the supply side, companies face a labor scarcity, and supply chains are disrupted, resulting in components and intermediate goods shortages. On the demand side, consumers face income loss, fear of contagion, and increased uncertainty, resulting in decreased expenditure and consumption. Therefore, the ability to remodel their business and reset new business strategies will be the success factors for SMEs to keep up with the changing business environment and customer patterns (Hu & Kee, 2021).

In the future, strengthening social protection is of utmost importance to improve the well-being of the Malaysian people, including self-employed workers, and prepare for the aging society (OECD, 2021). In addition, accelerating digitization is critical for Malaysian businesses to increase their productivity in the post-pandemic period. In 2020, the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation's (MDEC) expectation to hit 20% growth in e-commerce contribution to the digital economy can be achieved as the COVID-19 pandemic has given a massive boost to digital adoption among entrepreneurs (Loh et al., 2021). The Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA) has also advocated that Malaysia establish a national initiative on the Fourth Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0) for the services industry to accelerate the segment's digital transformation. However, SMEs in Malaysia are seen as not receptive to aligning businesses with coherent technology advancement (Muhamad et al., 2020).

Malaysia has a growing domestic F&B market, driven by an increasing population and rising income among the Southeast Asian countries. In addition, consumers prefer an assortment of merchandise in the modern urban lifestyle, including convenient foods and beverages (F&B) (Faizal et al., 2019). In 2015, the economic census recorded 167,490 food and beverage establishments, with an annual growth rate of 5.1% since 2010. According to Malaysia's Department of Statistics (DOSM) (2019), the economic census of food and beverage services revealed that the gross output generated by the services in these establishments was RM66.4bil, representing an annual growth of 12.2% or a total of RM29.1bil since 2010.

3 Methodology

This article uses secondary sources to explore the evolution of mobile eateries globally and locally. Among these secondary sources are academic and non-academic reports, articles, images, and illustrations from various offline (books and reports) and online search engine platform including Google and Bing. The main theme was focused and screened only on mobile eateries terms from recorded offline and online available documents. The search begins from the first written and image chronology record of mobile eateries in western country. Comparison of mobile eateries were then made against Malaysia mobile eateries growth and development since 1900s until the new concept of mobile eateries establishment, the food truck.

4 Findings

4.1 Mobile Eateries: Occidental and Global Perspectives

Mobile eateries, ever more popular nowadays, are mobile eateries that can be brought to desired locations and set up alongside streets and sidewalks, in parks, outdoor malls, at entertainment events, and such, where an ever-increasing variety of food products are available (Poarch, 2004). Mobile eateries have been a feature of American dining habits since the late 17th century when they were first seen in several of the country's major cities. Mobile eateries are not a new concept, and, indeed, they have existed for more than a century, dating back to the 1866 Western Chuck Wagons. The first authentic chuckwagon was taken "up the trail" in 1866 on possibly the first large cattle drive to the railroad (Hughes, 1974). Chuckwagons are the grandfathers of the entire food-on-wheels experience. The chuckwagon was named after cowboys who referred to their meals as "chuck," an English term that meant "excellent and hearty cuisine." The chuckwagon served ranchers and cowboys as a mobile kitchen, hospital, office, and bank in the years before barbed wire dissected and shrank the Great Plains, and the first chuckwagon was used in 1867 on a trail drive from central Texas to New Mexico (Hoy, 2010).

According to Hoy (2010), the chuck wagon, a mobile kitchen featuring a cook's worktable and drawers to carry food and utensils, was created and invented by Texas cattleman Charles Goodnight, a trailblazing rancher. Goodnight came up with the idea of repurposing an Army surplus wagon with full hardwood cupboards, cubbies, shelves, and drawers to store food and utensils, a hinged worktop for meal prep, and a large water barrel on the side. Foods prepared by the "cookie" were typically easy to preserve and would store well while traveling (Hallman, 2020). As a result, Chuckwagons became a familiar sight on Western trails. The availability of hot prepared meals, as opposed to hard ash cakes and salt pork from a saddlebag, boosted morale and moved the cattle-trailing industry forward (Bright, 2021). The chuckwagon concept has not died out, as it is the direct ancestor of modern food trucks in cities and towns all over the United States.

In 1872, in Providence, Rhode Island, Walter Scott's seller carved windows into a tiny covered wagon and placed them in front of a local newspaper office. He offered sandwiches with pies and coffee to journalists and pressmen working late from a box inside. It wasn't just journalists who stayed up late, but also night shift workers wanted a meal when they punched out, and party-goers wanted grub when they emerged from the bar (Ewbank, 2018). "Lunch wagons," as food trucks were dubbed at the time, quickly spread. Horse-drawn lunch wagons brought out onto city streets at night served simple, affordable food after regular restaurants closed for the night (Pierce, 2021). In the late 1880s, Thomas H. Buckley, a former lunch-counter boy stationed in Worcester, Massachusetts, began producing his own called the *Owl*, and the *White House Café* was his most well-known model. Within ten years, Buckley's wagons were in 275 locations across the United States. Buckley's wagons frequently featured stained glass windows,

mahogany woodwork, ornamentation, sinks, refrigerators, and cooking stoves. He also produced opulent carts embellished with silver and brass, plate-glass mirrors, and exquisite mosaics (Nightingale, 2014). The Worcester *Lunch Car* Company began operations following his premature death in 1903 at 35. In the early 1900s, their lunch cart evolved into the first stationary dining vehicle, which evolved into the diner as we know it today. Since then, food trucks have had a front seat in the world of American street food and are part of an ongoing food revolution (Myrick, 2019).

Karl Rudolf Fissler of Idar-Oberstein invented a mobile field kitchen in 1892 that the Germans came to refer to as a Gulaschkanone (Goulash Cannons) because the stove's chimney resembled ordnance pieces when disassembled and limbered for towing (Declercq, 2020). A field kitchen is a truck or trailer equipped to prepare and serve food to soldiers while in the field (Kilchermann, 2021). The goal was to ensure that every German soldier had at least one hot meal each day, and it was a cost-effective way to provide vast numbers of nourishing hot meals with limited resources. Throughout history, military units transported the first field kitchens in four-wheeled wagons. By the twentieth century, during the world war, smaller two-wheeled trailers had become widespread, mainly due to the locomotive's introduction. As in all wars, however, feeding the troops was often a challenge, and simply getting food to the soldiers could be difficult, especially when the enemy tried to zero in and attack supply lines (Army Heritage, 2020). Field kitchens were frequently dubbed affectionately. As technology advanced and horses were phased out in favor of motorized vehicles capable of carrying heavier cargo, larger trailers evolved. During WWII, mobile canteens were utilized as a morale booster in the United Kingdom, fitting in with the tea break culture and, in particular, resulting from the tea lady's successful wartime experiment on productivity and morale.

The following version of a food truck was a mobile canteen invented and authorized by the United States Army in 1917. The United States Army uses the notion of mobile food to feed troops in what is known as "canteens." A country at war needs a way to provide its moving troops fighting in WWI until WWII with hot and healthy meals. Therefore, motorized vehicles that were better equipped were required to tow heavier loads in remote locations during WWII. During World War II, mobile canteens were a common sight, and they were well equipped to serve tea, coffee, and hot food (White Ribbon, 2020).

The Wienermobile, created in 1936, was arguably the first food truck that would be recognized. Carl G. Mayer, Oscar Mayer's nephew, had this custom vehicle built by the General Body Company of Chicago in the shape of a hot dog to promote the brand around the Chicago area, and the driver sorts of poked out awkwardly from the middle of the car (Steele, 2019). To commemorate the 75th anniversary of this American icon in 2011, Oscar Mayer traveled across the country in a food truck incarnation of the Wienermobile to 12 cities all over America that continually serve hot dogs.

In the 1950s, ice cream trucks were the first businesses to take to the streets in modified vehicles that looked exactly like their trucks today. Larger trucks, known as "roach coaches," arrived in the 1960s, becoming the massive behemoths that sell tacos and burgers on the streets today (Butler, 2014). In 1974, Martinez converted an old ice cream truck into a mobile taco-making station and parked it outside a Los Angeles bar. His idea was a huge success, and after only six months of working out of his truck, he was able to open a restaurant, King Taco, which he later turned into a multi-million-dollar chain (Brown, 2017). Construction workers were the initial target demographic for all of these food trucks. Trucks would drive up to labour sites and distribute food to workers, allowing them to eat and swiftly return to work.

A "Street vendor" is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell them (Bhowmik, 2005). According to Bhowmik (2005), street vendors may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public or private rooms, or they may be mobile in the sense that they move from place to place by carrying their wares on pushcarts or in baskets on their heads. Additionally, mobile vending refers to vehicles adapted to transport, to accept or to comprise special loads or objects, the object being a shop, cafeteria, or display, the thing being a theatre or stage, and the object being a vending stall, restaurant, or food kiosk (Guard, 2008). However, during the 2000s, a fall in the economy impacted how food trucks were managed and how society ultimately viewed them. Many people lost their employment due to layoffs, including construction workers and cooks. This caused some lunch truck companies to shift toward a wider customer base and foods with a broader appeal, and the layoff of chefs left many in search of a way to make money while still using their skills (Hallman, 2020). Due to the lower cost of operating a food truck compared to starting a restaurant, they became a viable choice to extend the appeal of food trucks further. The popularity of these new food trucks can be mainly attributed to social media platforms. Some food truck vendors have used social media to promote their trucks' locations on any given day, mainly if they were continuously on the move.

4.2 Mobile Eateries: Malaysian Context

In Malaysia, mobile eateries also contribute to employment and income generation for underprivileged groups. In addition, mobile eateries have long served as an economical source of nutrition for society, particularly the urban poor. Mobile eateries are an intriguing and distinctive business sector that, despite their tiny size, makes a significant contribution to society. Mobile eateries are widely regarded as a unique destination characteristic, endowed with symbolic significance and a substantial predictor of total travel happiness, and promotional approach for tourism destinations.

In Penang, *nasi kandar* is a home-grown George Town gastronomic treasure and cultural signature that contributed towards the city's route to becoming a gastronomic city (Khoo & Badarulzaman, 2014). The inter-ethnic assimilation and acculturation of diverse values and cultures of these communities are reflected historically and culturally

through George Town residents' food culture and gastronomy (Leng & Badarulzaman, 2014). Mobile eateries in Malaysia started back in the early 1900s in the state of Penang. These hawkers were a familiar sight on the island's streets in their white attire, bearing their wares in two huge rattan baskets balanced on either end of a kandar stick. Established in 1907, steaming curries were once cooked on an open field and transported to the public via baskets of rice carried and balanced between a single-pole, "kandar." Although no longer transporting their rice on poles, Hameediyah continues to cook their delicious seafood, poultry, and vegetable dishes every day (Lin, 2021). These baskets would contain "nasi" or rice and an assortment of curries and vegetables (Abubakar, 2010). Home to century-old curries that have stood the test of time, Hameediyah was given the title of Malaysia's oldest Nasi Kandar restaurant by the Malaysia Books of Records in 2020, which soon will celebrate its 115th birthday (Lin, 2021).

Nasi kandar, which originated in the nineteenth century, served as a nutritious breakfast for migrant labourers and coolies when Penang Weld Quay Port was established as an international port in the Malacca Straits. Due to the long and tiring hours, workers needed meals that were cost-effective, quick, and easy (Chow, 2018). The coolies were primarily Chinese and Indian immigrants. Rice peddlers came to the coolies' dock job on foot to feed the hordes of workers cheaply and effectively. On one of his shoulders, the rice vendor carried a mangrove pole about seven feet long. Traditional mobile eateries provide ready-to-eat food and beverages prepared partially or entirely in public spaces, relying on fresh, locally sourced ingredients that require little or no storage time. Traditionally, nasi kandar is served with its accompanying dishes on one platter, including plenty of rice, fish curry with fried fish, and okra. Traditional bamboo poles called "kandar" are used to sell and distribute the dish, which gave the word its current name. Nowadays, nasi kandar is commonly prepared and sold at hawker centres around the country, typically enjoyed as a nutritious, warm breakfast. The traditional mobile eateries' popularity of nasi kandar has expanded into other states in Malaysia due to their low price and offer a quick way to satisfy hunger for busy locals. Today, Indian Muslim culture and cuisine have attracted a substantial number of high-spending power tourists from countries in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and Muslim tourists from China (Selamat & Azmi, 2016).

A pushcart and food bike, similar to the operations of a famous nasi kandar, is a non-motorized hawker's mobile eatery service station. A carbon-neutral, eco-friendly method of distributing and vending food around the city. Mobile eateries that pushcarts and food bikes parked in every corner of the streets were widely used in Malaysia from the 1960s to the 1970s, which provided a more sanitary location for both vendors and customers to dine in. The majority of the hawker units are semi-static or static types, selling various goods ranging from processed and prepared food to non-food items (Yeung, 1974). The street vendors offer hot-fresh, lip-smacking snacks, which are very filling and have an absolute value for money. Take-out food, junk food, snacks, and fast food are synonymous with street food, and all of these can be purchased on the

footpath without entering any building (Kumar, 2015). Both have become a part of Malaysia's culinary legacy, proudly surviving the passage of time and changing lifestyles. In Malaysia, food stalls and pushcarts sold a broad selection of ethnic street food (Snodgrass, 2004).

These vendors were predominantly Chinese and Tamil Muslims from India, and hawker food is accessible to anyone in a culture where eating out is cheap, time-saving, and more convenient than cooking at home (Khoo, 2017). Fresh soya milk, soup, mee goreng (fried noodles), laksa, and cendol are among the famous ethnic street foods offered on pushcarts or bicycles. Due to the limited recordings of food history in Southeast Asia, though, the true origins of cendol can be a little contentious (Loh, 2019). Loh (2019) noted that the earliest mention of cendol was found in a piece of Malaysian text, a 1932 article from the Malaysian newspaper *Saudara*. The dessert has gone by many other regional names of traditional and new dishes of diverse cultural communities (Malay, Chinese, and Indian). The different cuisines have, over time, organically influenced each other gastronomically and adapted to local ingredients and tastes through the process of inculturation, creating hybrid dishes that are genuinely transcultural and Malaysian in taste (Perry, 2017). It is also a valuable representation of local and regional specialties in the era of internationalization and transnational migration, acquiring heritage recognition in many places as it depicts history and tradition and exemplifies to tourists a cultural way of life (Chong & Stephenson, 2020).

Mobile eateries, including hawkers or street vendors, are self-sufficient and conduct their enterprises from moveable platforms such as carts and stalls. They continue to play a role in providing affordable food to society, particularly among the urban poor. The use of motorcycles or motorbikes attached to the carts has made mobile eateries more convenient to operate from various concentrated locations along the city streets in Malaysia (Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, and Johor Bahru) since the 1980s. The street food trade is a vibrant and expanding part of private enterprise in developing countries (Cohen, 1984). There is a substantial increase in the number of street vendors in major Asian cities, including Malaysia, not merely because it is an essential source of employment but also because it serves the urban population (Bhowmik, 2005). Motorbike street vendors are also admired for their distinct flavor and convenience and for preserving the nutritional value of traditional dishes. This 'multiculturalism' among the different races produced a distinctive cuisine of Malaysia is described as "Asia's greatest cuisines meet and mingle" that have been the bedrock informing and shaping the dishes which are accepted by people from all walks of life in the country (Hutton & Invernizzi, 2005). Food is commonly available close to workplaces and is delivered directly to the place of work. Consumers often choose street and snack foods based on cost and convenience, the type of food available, and its appeal to consumers' taste (Fellows & Hilmi, 2011). These dishes are alternatives to homemade food and are cheaper than food offered in restaurants.

Additionally, the geography of a hawker centre does not only consist of the street vendors making their appearance and doing business on the streets, but also of

their customers with their needs and desires, the passers-by in cars or other vehicles, and the government employees that have to regulate public space and, with it, street vending (Backhaus, 2015). These mobile motorbike eateries were also operated during odd and irregular operating hours ranging from early morning until late night. Working hours were arranged based on hawkers' schedules rather than customers' demands and needs (Omar & Ishak, 2016). Street food vending is essentially an urban phenomenon, and this trend is further expected to increase exponentially with increasing urbanization and population growth, especially in developing countries (Malhotra, 2017). Street food contributes to a sizable share of economic employment, daily urban food consumption by millions of low-and middle-income consumers, and revenue generation in Malaysia's informal sectors.

The trend of mobile eateries and street food vendors in Malaysia has continued to expand into a new concept of the night market (*Pasar Malam*) since the 1960s. A night market is where mobile eateries (hawkers and street food vendors) temporarily occupy a designated public area or street during the night for economic activities. A night market is a retail establishment classified as a market with moving stalls, with the stall arrangement extending down the road and utilizing public or private spaces (Ibrahim & Leng, 2003). In the 1970s, Malaysia's government started to recognize the contribution of night market hawkers and food vendors as critical economic activities which generate alternative income for the locals. Therefore, it is a must for hawkers and street food vendors to comply with the rules and regulations set by the respective local councils, specifically in Kuala Lumpur. Night markets provide an opportunity for night market traders to earn extra income. For buyers, night markets can help them acquire a variety of daily necessities at low prices and a variety of everyday needs in the night market. The night market made famous by all levels of society sells kitchen essentials (wet and dry goods), clothing, fruits, food, drinks, and other items (Salleh et al., 2012). Additionally, the night market allows customers to enjoy a wide variety and choice of freshly cooked food at affordable prices (Hassam et al., 2017).

In the 1980s, the night market concept has grown throughout Malaysia. A dedicated location is provided and usually by the roadside nearby residential area for mobile eateries (hawkers & street food vendors) to move stalls that serve various local dishes. The night market has many physical features, including an open space atmosphere, a long square table for the display of their products, a canvas canopy fitted to the size of the rented stall and identical to the other night market traders in the same area (Ramli & Jamri, 2021). Such spaces had substantial implications for the local authorities to plan and control the region, especially the timing and movement of traders in and out of the areas (Ishak et al., 2012). Additionally, the night market site is planned by the local authority in which the location must not disrupt the traffic or public roads (Ramli & Jamri, 2021). Local authorities had also begun to realize the night market's roles in encouraging the youth population greater involvement in the business. They could be considered business incubators for aspiring entrepreneurs since they

would need a minimal investment to start the business. The risk of failure was minimal, and there was the opportunity to earn a hefty income (Ishak et al., 2012).

In promoting Malaysia's economic blueprint, fostering entrepreneurialism and producing entrepreneurs capable of developing innovative indigenous product concepts is essential. Night markets nowadays sell basic goods, but many traders are currently building and selling goods more appealing to buyers in terms of the uniqueness of each product's sales, which is due to competitiveness in achieving the desired sales return (Hassam et al., 2017). The most popular fantastic night market in Kuala Lumpur is located at Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman (TAR), which has operated since the 1990s every Saturday night. Lorong TAR has become a popular tourist destination for those interested in experiencing local unique, street, and cultural, economic activities. Due to its strategic location and proximity to public transport and amenities, local and foreign tourists are attracted to the Lorong TAR night market.

In the early 1970s, night market acculturation and assimilation among Malays, Chinese, and Indians produced and created a potpourri of local cuisine and beverages, resulting in a Malaysian cultural and gastronomical legacy. Gastronomy derives its name from the Greek words "gastros," which means stomach, and "nomos," which means knowledge or regulation (Zahari et al., 2009). Food is an attribute whereby tourists perceive the attractiveness of a destination for a reason other than climate, accommodation, and captivating scenery. Thus, it is a fundamental element of the tourist product (Zainal et al., 2010). Malaysia benefits from having a diverse ethnic group and race because it has a diverse gastronomic product line, which directly contributes to its economy and promotes gastronomy tourism (Yusoff et al., 2013). "*Gastro diplomacy*" has been introduced recently to explain how countries use their national cuisines to promote their countries, cultures, and foods, attract foreign tourists, and build political relations (Nahar et al., 2018). Associated with Visit Malaysia Year, which was first launched in 1990, gastronomy tourism and gastro diplomacy are increasingly becoming factors in the growth of specialized travel and specialty destinations.

Malaysia's long history of gastronomy tourism was established in April 1977 when London's best South East Asian restaurant, *Rumah Makan*, was officially opened and served honestly and reliably Malaysian food (Brownfoot, 1977). To ensure Malaysian authenticity, the owner, Mr. Syed Hamid, and his wife, *Kak Pah*, flew in many ingredients from Malaysia, including fresh *serai* (lemongrass), *pandan* leaf, and fish curry powder. As a result, more than a thousand Malaysian cuisine restaurants have been established in various countries, including the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, and China, which promoted the government's Malaysia Kitchen Program (MKP) from 2006 to 2015. The Malaysia Kitchen Program (MKP) is an initiative to encourage national branding through authentic Malaysian cuisine and support the entrance of Malaysian food products to targeted markets.

4.3 Mobile Eateries: Malaysian Food Truck

The night market's street food vendors and hawkers have continued to grow in recent years due to a more attractive business model with a good income. The physical trucks have distinct personalities. The uniqueness of the food they offer has made gourmet food trucks a popular dining choice, and a fusion of taste is the best way to describe the innovative food creations that food trucks are known for (Ibrahim, 2011). The term "food truck" generally refers to a motorized vehicle often customized from which an operator sells food to consumers where. These trucks typically contain cooking facilities the operator uses to prepare food, sometimes customized according to a particular consumer's order (Linnekin, 2011). Food truck business is the best alternative to explore the new concepts and dishes for those who are long on ideas but short on capital and does not only provide entrepreneurs an opportunity to get into business, but it also expands the industry by creating new jobs and improving the quality of life (Ab Wahab et al., 2017). The food and beverage industry is turning to mobile vendors, including food trucks, as a new and promising business proposition. With the current trend, the vendor's creativity and consumer demands influence the evolution of the food truck business in Malaysia (Rahman, 2019).

Mobile eateries, the new generation of food trucks in Malaysia, are undergoing a revolution. Food trucks are a fun-oriented business that has the potential to grow over time, which means a daily basis of profit can be earned with the right plan for a younger, enthusiastic new generation. In 2014, it was reported that the food truck business had become the most significant trend in the food and beverage (F & B) industry in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (Rahman et al., 2019). Thus, Flaming Wheels Foodtruck has been identified as the first established and most famous food truck in Malaysia (Ghazali et al., 2016). According to Ghazali et al. (2016), the owner (Dina Blazevic), who started the business in 2013, saw the idea on the television program and projected the future trend of foodservice in Malaysia. Additionally, LaFamiglia Food Truck is an Italian mafia-themed food truck specializing in pasta menus. It established its business in 2014 and used to station its business in Damansara Height, Kuala Lumpur. Danial Marizd and his co-owner embarked on LaFamiglia as young entrepreneurs looking for something new in Malaysia's market F & B industry trends (Ab Wahab et al., 2017). The idea is to sell trendy and healthy on the go cheaper pasta, convenient and more accessible for customers to reach any location in Klang Valley. The unique and distinctive business model is the main attraction for the LaFamiglia food truck.

The food truck model has been relatively prevalent among people due to an increase in youth spending, middle-class spending, conscious consumerism, mobile lifestyles, and the need for food on the go. Thus, with low startup costs and limited risk, food trucks quickly become a popular alternative for first-time restaurateurs. The majority of these food truck vendors formerly operated part-time due to their permanent occupations, but after receiving positive feedback from consumers, some have decided to go full-time. Food trucks have become a popular choice for entrepreneurs looking to establish a new restaurant business in Malaysia on a

shoestring budget and minimal risk. Food truck ventures have become popular due to their low startup cost of investment. Because of the lack of additional expenses in operating their business, food truck owners can often sell their food at cheaper prices (Hawk, 2013). Talip & Haris (2018) also assert that food trucks are one of the current business trends in Malaysia because the costs of running a food truck business are low, and it has mobility. It is estimated that an average of RM15,000-RM20,000 is required to start a small-scale food truck business given no hassle in property renovation or rental costs compared to setting a restaurant on the shop lots, for example (SMEinfo, 2018). Low initial setup and operational costs give food trucks high competitive advantage, unlike an average restaurant or café setup. Since the setup cost is cheaper and it's quicker to establish, those young entrepreneurs only need to own a vehicle and identify the perfect location to mobilize their business (SMEinfo, 2018).

Table 1: Food Truck Business Costs Breakdown. SMEinfo (2018).

ITEM	COST
Register with SSM (Compulsory)	RM 100
Register with Bank (Compulsory)	RM 200
Good Driving License (GDL) (Compulsory)	RM 500
Local Business Permit from Local Authorities	RM 500 /Year
Working Capital	RM 3,000 (minimum)
Foodtruck Deposit (minimum 10% from total price for e.g. RM55,000)	RM5,500
Foodtruck Installment	RM 600/month
Signboards and Bunting	RM 300
Foodtrucks Sticker (basic)	RM 500
Equipment (kitchen, gas, freezer etc)	RM 4, 000
Typhoid Immunisation Injection (Compulsory)	RM 40 - RM 80
Food Serving Course (Compulsory)	RM 100 - RM 200
Preparation of Raw Material	RM4, 000 - RM 8,000/month
Maintenance	RM 300

Previous research has established that servicescape factors, including the ambiance, layout, and signage, positively correlate with the customer's perceptions of the food truck concept (Ghazali et al., 2016). By designing their vehicles with eye-catching graphics that tempt visitors to purchase their products and decorating the outside of the truck, the entrepreneur can efficiently market their brand while driving around town. In addition, the food truck model provides a casual and quick experience with an approachable nature that appeals to consumers (Embden, 2020). Thus, millennials enjoy sharing images of their fantastic food truck meals with the present food truck trend, which millennials crave for alternatives and the possibility of customizing their order. Millennials expect diversity, more choices, adaptation, and their capacity to customize their dining experience. Hence, the appealing and unique design and services of the food truck business concept make it easier to develop a willingness to return. In

Malaysia, the Malaysian government directive for eateries, including restaurants, food trucks, hawkers, and food kiosks, is to operate only from 6.00 am till midnight, and no dine-in is allowed during the strict standard operating procedure (SOP) of the Covid19 pandemic lockdown. In addition, only take-away, drive-thru, or food delivery are permitted. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak, businesses were closed, and social distance rules were implemented; restaurants were particularly hard hit. However, not all foodservice firms were equally impacted: by definition, food trucks or mobile eateries have greater flexibility to continue operating. Food trucks (FT) business models have a competitive advantage because they can sell their hotel-level menu at a lower street price to the customer at any point of location. For some reason, food tastes better when served from a truck, with its reasonable costs and mouth-watering, appealing nibbles on wheels, introduce new gastronomic adventures to millennials.

The merging of gourmet cuisine and high-end food trucks is another trend that has slightly fallen below the radar, but merits notice. Gourmet is a term that refers to high-end food, a person who enjoys it, or a restaurant or other establishment where you may purchase or cook it. Adding gourmet to any meal or beverage elevates its perceived value and makes it more appealing. Gourmet Food Trucks (GFTs) are changing the food truck service by adopting new solutions in food preparation and equipment, where their services are provided, the food offered, and the socio-environmental design (Alfiero et al., 2018). Gourmet Food Trucks (GFTs) are more efficient than traditional food trucks (TFTs) and confirm that innovation is an essential key to competitive advantage in this sector (Alfiero et al., 2017). Gourmet food refers to food and drink that takes extra care to make or acquire, and gourmet food is often found or made only in specific locations. Its ingredients may be unusual, hard to find in regular grocery stores, available in limited amounts, rarely exported outside of their place of origin, or available only for short periods of the year (Moore, 2020). The new trend of gourmet food in Malaysia allows customers to experience various gourmet food trends on the street.

TAPAK Urban Street Dining Kuala Lumpur is one example, where it is a dedicated area for food trucks to sell gastronomic delights of local, western, and oriental cuisines (Saber et al., 2020). TAPAK Urban was founded in 2016 as Malaysia's first food truck park, bringing together local food truck owners and food enthusiasts to promote urban street food and gourmet culture. The first TAPAK Urban food truck park was established in Jalan Ampang, near KLCC. In 2020, 6 TAPAK Urban food truck parks were established in Klang Valley, including KLCC, Permaisuri, Amcorp Mall PJ, TTDI, Cyberjaya & Shah Alam. The TAPAK Urban food truck park is beautifully decorated. The lights hang smoothly, and the area is warmer and more welcoming, attracting urban young people, the elderly, and young families with kids. TAPAK Urban food truck park allows the food truck operator to build and expand its brand into the new gourmet trend in Malaysia's F & B industry. Each day, and everywhere it goes, a well-branded truck can draw attention for the food truck operator through its brand identity. A food truck is a great way to extend the brand and reach new customers (Weber, 2012). As consumers

nowadays are well educated and well-informed, understanding consumer buying trends has grown more difficult for the food truck operator.

Table 2: Global & Malaysia Mobile Eateries Development Summary

1866	Western Chuck Wagons	1907	Hameediyah Nasi Kandar
1872	Lunch Wagons	1930s	Penang Street Stall
1880s	Owl and the White House Café	1950	Ipoh Nasi Kandar
1892	Germans Soldier Mobile Field Kitchen	1960s	Push-cart and Food Bike
1900s	Worcester Lunch Car	1970s	Hawkers / Street Vendors
1900s	British Troop Field Kitchen	1971	Night Market
1917	US Army Mobile Canteen	2014	Food Trucks
1936	Oscar Mayer’s Food Truck		
1950	Ice Cream Street Vendor		
2000s	Food Truck		

5 Conclusion

This article aims to review the wide-ranging body of literature on the evolution of mobile eateries over more than 100 years worldwide and from a global and Malaysian perspective. The findings found distinctiveness of its food and beverage culture makes Malaysia a street food and mobile eatery gastronomic paradise. This article demonstrates Malaysia's food culture and heritage in supporting branding Malaysia as a fabulous culinary delight, promoting Malaysia as multi-culturally-influenced street food and mobile eateries. Street food and mobile eateries continue to increase in popularity in Malaysia, contributing to the country's socio-economic development and gastronomy or culinary tourism. This article develops an understanding of mobile eateries' evolution, roles, and contributions in gastronomic tourism. In addition, this article examines Malaysia Small Medium Enterprise (SME) F&B growth and mobile eateries' history, development, and their contribution to the food culture and tourism industry. This paper also contributes to the empowerment of academic and industry players in the culinary tourism business. Only a limited number of printed literature were found within a short period during the 2021 Covid-19 Malaysia Control Order (MCO). As this article serves as preliminary work for mobile eateries' body of literature, it is recommended to review the literature with a more systematic methodology.

6 About the author

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