

Research Paper

Food Heritage-Making and Innovations in Malaysian Foodways by Food Trucks: An Exploratory Study in Klang Valley, Malaysia

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Abstract: Street food's contribution to tourism and destination promotion is quite well established. While there is an emergence of a novel type of street food stakeholders, food truckers, little is known about their potential contribution to food tourism and food heritage-making. This research investigates how food trucks contribute to heritage-making and innovation in Malaysian foodways through host-guest interactions. Particularly, this study looks at the dimensions of food system, culinary space, and consumption patterns at food truck parks. A qualitative study was conducted through observations at TAPAK (a food truck park) and semi-structured interviews with the Tourism Selangor Board, Kuala Lumpur Food Truck Entrepreneur Association (KLFTEA), TAPAK, and a selection of food truckers in the Klang Valley. The findings highlight that food trucks in Ampang and Cheras promote a culture of *lepak* defined as “sitting outdoor in a laidback manner in an innovative atmosphere while enjoying food”. Host-guest interactions at food truck parks lead to heritage-making of the *lepak* and street hawker culture as the study participants view them as a component of the Malaysian food culture. These interactions together with the spatial mobility of food truckers encourage innovations in the cooking and serving of food. Findings also highlight that promotions of local food culture and social interactions via the *lepak* culture to guests by food truckers could be supported further by tourism institutions, food truck associations, and TAPAK through training programs for food truck operators.

Keywords: Food trucks, food heritage-making, innovations, host-guest interactions, mobilities, Malaysia

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Introduction

Street food and hawkers contribute to the global food tourism as a tourist attraction (Bellia, Pilato, & Seraphin, 2016), involving local food culture and foodways. For example, Singapore's hawker culture, part of the country's heritage & national identity, is listed in the intangible heritage of humanity by UNESCO (Zaccheus, 2018). This inclusion is to preserve and promote their local food and multicultural heritage to future generations and to the global community. Singapore boasted a street food culture in the 60s and 70s but has since moved to designated "food centres" and "hawker centres" due to modernisation and hygiene requirements (White, 2018). Undoubtedly, street food contributes significantly to food heritage-making and tourism promotion in many countries, by allowing people to "discover new tastes and then get in touch with those places one does not know" (Privitera & Nesci, 2015).

Meanwhile, food trucks, emergent actors of street food, have become the preference for most food lovers around the world to enjoy the taste of Malaysian food ("Food trucks", 2016). The food truck scene thus poses an interesting research topic in exploring how it attracts people to food truck parks in search of local, diverse foods and Malaysian street food culture, and its contribution to food tourism. Food truckers are mobile food vendors who move on the road in cities (domestic) and countries (international) as well as have shifted away from other occupations, i.e. street hawkers (occupational mobility), offering delicious meals recognised mostly as Malaysian street food (Nathan, 2016). As such, food trucks in Malaysia, similar to street hawkers, can promote the culinary & tourism industry (Thiagarajan, 2017). However, very little is known about food trucks as an innovation and a wider category of street foods (Alfiero, Lo Giudice, & Bonadonna, 2017). Moreover, existing studies are mostly focused on hygiene and food safety issues, risk factors in street food practices as well as the nutrition knowledge of food (Cortese, Veiros, Feldman, & Cavalli, 2016; Hill, Mchiza, Puoane, & Steyn, 2018).

This study looks at how food trucks in Klang Valley play a role in food heritage-making such as eating practices, cooking methods, and serving traditions. These foodways may be familiarized through social interactions as food is a cultural identity, heritage (Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018) and social integration tool (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Thus, it can be questioned: How much do food trucks promote food heritage and innovate Malaysian foodways? How much food heritage-making & innovation is carried out by food truckers to promote food tourism?

From the academic perspective, this study aims to demonstrate food heritage-making and tourism promotion by food truckers and institutional stakeholders which can contribute to the growing literature of tourism and heritage. Additionally, this study aims to help institutional stakeholders to assist food truckers in the promotion of the local food and *lepak* culture to guests. We first reviewed the literature for

three dimensions: linking tourism and food heritage-making, while understanding food trucks' connection to heritage-making & innovations in Malaysian foodways through spatial mobilities and host-guest interactions. Secondly, we presented the methods of investigation, relying on observations at food truck parks and interviews with actors of the tourism system, such as food truckers, as well as institutional stakeholders such as TAPAK, Tourism Selangor, and Kuala Lumpur Food Truck Entrepreneur Association (KLFTEA). The findings of this study are then presented according to the main assumptions. The paper finally concludes with the highlights of the findings and discussions, followed by recommendations for further research.

Literature Review

How does Food Heritage-Making Promote Food Tourism?

Beginning in early 20th century, tourism became a social phenomenon worldwide (Graburn & Jafari, 1991). Tourism can also be understood within the common framework of the acculturation theory (Nunez, 1963), where tourists are the “donor” culture, while local people are viewed as the “recipient” culture. Tourism and heritage appear simultaneously where both are linked in a virtuous cycle (Gravari-Barbas, 2018). Amidst the many debates around food heritage, the definition best suited for this study was selected. Food heritage, a cultural and social construction, combined with conservation and innovation, involves all kinds of food knowledge and skills shared by local people as legacies (Bessière, 1998; Bessière & Tibère, 2010). According to Bessière (1998), “food” as a heritage component is a tourist attraction, integration, and social dynamization. Also, heritage is an evolving social product subject to constant change and innovation, aimed at promoting tourism in a destination. Moreover, the promotion of heritage is considered as a process by which local people cater for the development and promotion of tourism (Bessière, 1998). Tourism also plays a role in promoting food heritage where local people adapt by modifying the native food practices and recipes to satisfy the tourists. (Bessière & Tibère, 2013). Hence, tourism is considered as a heritage-producing machine while heritage is a driver for tourism (Gravari-Barbas, 2018).

Generally, heritage-making involves the process of addition, transformation, or re-affirmation of heritage as values are attached to them (Sjöholm, 2016). More specifically, heritage-making also refers to the invention or change of cultural heritage (Brumann & Berliner, 2016). In particular, food heritage-making is a social construction where certain foodstuffs and foodways are articulated as heritage (Guan, Gao, & Zhang, 2019). This occurs as food is constantly rediscovered and reinvented for local development and identity (Grasseni, 2011), leading to tourism promotion. A part of food heritage is street foods and hawkers in many countries. As such, food trucks, a trending phenomenon, has become a novel street food stakeholder,

providing a variety of culinary options and street foods. Thus, the question that arises is to what extent do they contribute to the process of heritage-making of street food and vendors which are a global culinary heritage?

How do Street Foods and Food Trucks Promote Intangible Food Heritage & Innovations?

The street food trade has been a practice in several countries since ancient times and people often prefer to go out with family and friends to experience street foods, as an alternative to their daily food routine (Bellia et al., 2016). In Malaysia, night markets and mamak stalls foster the street food culture and *lepak* (hangout) culture which enables social interactions among people. The *lepak* culture is further discussed by Yeoh (2016), where the street hawkers, mamak stalls and night markets are seen as a network that encourages this culture among people as they hang out with family and friends after work or school. Thus, the *lepak* culture can be considered as one of Malaysian foodways through the act of interacting with one another and sharing life experiences over food.

According to Yeoman and McMahon-Beatte (2016), food truckers share conversations with tourists regarding traditions, culture, and heritage, and thus, indirectly promote the food culture. Food truckers also allow customer engagement as customers taste their food and offer suggestions on improving the food offerings or altering the ingredients (Hawk, 2013). According to Grasseni (2011), food trucks are the core settings for taste innovation, offering customers a meal out of the traditional dining experience. Thus, interactions at food truck parks may enhance knowledge of foodways such as eating practices and etiquettes. Hence, the study intends to explore how food trucks, as new players in the street food industry, can promote Malaysian foodways, especially the street food and *lepak* culture?

Poulain (1997) stressed that cuisine is more than a recipe, as it constitutes foodways or the intangible heritage of local and street foods, and posited that food revolves around the registers of tangibility (foodstuff) and intangibility (see for example Matta, 2016). Hence, the next question that can be asked: Do food trucks promote more of the intangible food heritage or foodways instead of local foodstuff globally? In this regard, food truckers can be conceptualized as a part of the food system, enabling host-guest interactions and providing innovations in culinary space and consumption patterns. As such, “food social space” (Poulain, 2002) can be used to systematically study a food culture and food heritage to define its cultural identity. The food culture differentiates six interconnected social dimensions of food: edible space, food system, culinary space, space of food habits (consumption patterns), eating and rhythm of time, and social differentiation space.

How are Food Heritage-Making and Innovations Facilitated by Host-Guest Interactions and Spatial Mobilities?

Food heritage-making can be facilitated by host-guest interactions, as suggested by Su and Wall (2010), where interactions enhance locals' interest in their own traditions, culture, heritage and food identity, leading to food heritage-making. Furthermore, a host community not only provides a local cuisine to tourists (Timothy & Ron, 2013) but also shares its culinary and cultural practices of food. As such, hosts revitalize food culture and traditions at destinations and guests acquire cultural knowledge from them (Putova, 2018).

Food heritage-making involves social changes and transformations within "food social spaces" through the social dimensions of food culture (Poulain, 2002) which can be considered as innovations in foodways. According to Fagerberg (2003), innovations are ways in which old and new uses are addressed. Innovation in cooking represents how processed foods undergo changes, indicating new "foodie" trends. More particularly, innovations means changing ones' traditional food as one draws on new knowledge and skills from others (Benny, 2012). Following Schumpeter's analysis, the types of innovations found in the tourism industry revolves around product, process, technological, market, functional, and social innovations (Alsos, Eide, & Madsen, 2014; Bessant & Tidd, 2007). Local foods become popular with tourists only after they have been innovated to suit them with local food and foodways (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Timothy & Ron, 2013). In fact, transformations may occur combining foreign and local cuisines where new dishes emerge known as "fusion" food (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

In order to facilitate host-guest interactions that bring about food heritage-making, there needs to be mobility. Mobility strengthens and promotes cultural heritage as tourists document places, food culture, and heritage on global platforms (Sheller & Urry, 2004) while residents travel to other parts of the country (Ursache, 2015), cooking and innovating their traditional food to preserve their culture. Thus, food heritage-making & innovations are also facilitated by mobility as people create and recreate food heritage when they travel between places. Mobility here can be occupational and spatial mobility (Urry, 2012), where spatial mobility refers to moving from one location to another while occupational mobility refers to changes in individual occupational status (Fernandez-Zubieta, Geuna, Alberto, & Lawson, 2015). Food truckers are also mobile food vendors because of their mobility when they move between places (domestic mobility), when they move between countries (international mobility) or when they shift from different jobs or business (occupational mobility). From the core concepts discussed by Cresswell (2006) and Urry (2016), the mobility of truckers and spatial mobility itself are questioned and explored in this study.

Research Framework

This study looks at the food social space (Poulain, 2002) of food truckers, specifically paying attention to host-guest interactions, as well as understanding the types of innovations that take place at food truck parks. Three assumptions were derived from the schema shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Research framework schema

In this study, the spatial mobility of tourists and food truckers is considered. From the figure, spatial mobility leads to heritage-making and innovations to define specific food culture and foodways as well as inventing something to define themselves. Hence, the following first assumption is suggested:

Assumption 1: Spatial mobility of the food truckers and tourists contribute to food heritage-making and innovations.

The *lepak* culture of Malaysia involves interactions among hosts and guests who are a part of the tourism system. Host-guest interactions in turn facilitates heritage-making and innovations. This paper explores the dimensions of food culture such as the food system, culinary space and consumptions patterns from which food heritage is selected. Hence, the second assumption is derived as follows:

Assumption 2: Host-guest interactions at different food parks lead to food heritage-making and innovations regarding food system, culinary space and consumption patterns of the Malaysian ‘food social space’.

Food heritage-making and innovations led by the food truckers in the food system, culinary space and consumption patterns of Malaysian food culture might

lead to tourism promotion. This can take place as tourists or guests might be motivated to come and experience the street food culture or *lepak* culture provided at food truck parks in Klang Valley which are promoted by institutional stakeholders. The leads to the third assumption as follows:

Assumption 3: Food heritage-making and innovations from food truckers contribute to the promotion of Malaysian tourism by institutional stakeholders.

Methodology

This study employed the interpretivism approach and a qualitative research design to gain an understanding of the food truck industry in Klang Valley. Food truck operators at Ampang and Cheras were interviewed based on their convenience while experts such as representatives from TAPAK, Tourism Selangor and KLFTEA were contacted using the purposive and snowballing technique. The duration of data collection was from September 2019 until March 2020. The researcher conducted observations at two TAPAK urban street dining parks (Ampang and Cheras) to document food trucks' menus and host-guest interactions. Fifteen semi-structured interviews were also conducted and the profiles of the participants are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Profile and interview schedule of food truckers

Alias of Food trucks	Location of interviews (TAPAK)	Date of interviews
9th Valley	Ampang	October 28, 2019
The Burger Spot	Ampang	October 31, 2019
Satay Truck	Ampang	November 9, 2019
Burger Express	Ampang	November 18, 2019
Nasi Goreng Truck	Ampang	November 25, 2019
Malaysian Food Wagon	Ampang	November 25, 2019
Smoked King	Ampang	December 10, 2019
The Churros Truck	Ampang	December 15, 2019
Nasi Lemak Truck	Ampang	December 20, 2019
Teh-Tarik Truck	Ampang	January 10, 2020
The Sandwich Club	Cheras	February 12, 2020
Cheese hut	Cheras	February 13, 2020

Table 2. Profile and interview schedule of the institutional stakeholders

Expert Stakeholder	Institution	Position	Role	Interview dates (2020)	Interview place
TAPAK owner	TAPAK Urban Street Dining	Branding director of TAPAK	Promote TAPAK globally	February 17	Office of TAPAK
Tourism Selangor officer	Tourism Selangor Board	Senior Event Executive	Create events to promote local and heritage foods	February 20	Office of Tourism Selangor
KLFTEA representative	Kuala Lumpur Food Truck Entrepreneur Association	President of KLFTEA	Provide guideline to food truckers and TAPAK set by the government	March 10	Starbucks café

The collected data from the interviews and observations were analysed using a thematic approach where themes were evaluated to ensure they represented the whole of the text, and involved discussions with supervisors on how to interpret the themes effectively with regard to the research framework of this study. The supervisors also made their own interpretation of the information gathered to ensure the trustworthiness of the data analysis. The findings from the data analysis are discussed next.

Findings

Food Trucks’ Contribution to the Heritage-Making of the *Lepak* and Street Food Culture

The findings from the exploratory observations and various interviews with stakeholders support assumption 2 as the street food culture and *lepak* culture encourage host-guest interactions. Some of the food truckers’ views on street food and *lepak* culture are given here:

“At TAPAK, customers come to eat food outside in an open environment with chairs and tables. This is called the ‘lepak’ culture.” (The Burger Spot)

“People have a place to dine by themselves and chill for as long as they want in food trucks similar to street hawkers.” (Nasi Lemak Truck)

These comments suggest that TAPAK sites with many food trucks provide a place that promotes the *lepak* culture by allowing guests to sit and chill with their choice of food.

According to the truckers, food trucks contribute to the heritage-making of street food and hawkers as they promote the *lepak* culture. However, one of the truckers has a different take on the *lepak* culture, as food truckers foster the street food heritage of Malaysia by allowing people to enjoy food in an open environment with proper seating arrangements as well as giving them the opportunity to socialize. The *lepak* culture can be considered as a part of Malaysian foodways when one food trucker commented: “*Food trucks promote Malaysian foodways where people come out, sit in an open space and enjoy varieties of food with friends and family*” (The Sandwich Club). Although, food trucks do not necessarily promote local foods, they promote the street food culture where Malaysians like to hang around and enjoy the ambience with cultural bites. This sentiment is echoed by TAPAK’s owner and Tourism Selangor’s representative, respectively:

“Food trucks provide a street food culture where people walk around with vendors surrounding them, having food in an open space. This is lepak culture, considered as the food heritage of our country.”

“Food trucks allow people to experience a minor portion of what the Malaysian street food culture is.”

Spatial Mobility of Food Trucks and Tourists Contribute to Food Heritage-Making and Innovations

Findings also confirm that the spatial mobility of food truckers contribute to food heritage-making and innovations in Malaysian foodways. It has been observed that the food trucks at TAPAK (Ampang) also operate at another location (Cheras) which makes them spatially mobile, experiencing different selling places and different customers. The mobility of the truckers interviewed are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Mobility of food truckers interviewed

Alias of Food trucks	Previous occupations	Innovations
9th Valley	Sold drinks on Melaka streets	Functional & product
The Burger Spot	Construction worker and a part-time food trucker	
Satay Truck	Architecture & street hawker	Functional
Burger Express	Studied abroad as well as sold Malaysian food from home	Product

Table 3 (con't)

Alias of Food trucks	Previous occupations	Innovations
Nasi Goreng Truck	Street hawker in Perak	Functional
Malaysian Food Wagon	Sold food from home to home, small events & festivals	
Smoked King	Chef in hotel	Product
The Churros Truck	Sold churros at events & festivals	Functional
Nasi Lemak Truck	Worked in Dubai hotels as a chef	Product
Teh-Tarik Truck	'Point of sale' business (online ordering system)	Product
The Sandwich Club	Mechanical engineer and a street hawker	Functional
Cheese hut	Street hawker	Functional

Table 3 shows that 9th Valley moved from Melaka to Kuala Lumpur, diversifying its business: *“We offer Burgers, Mac and cheese in Malaysian style which we learnt from a chef in Langkawi”* (9th Valley). This spatial mobility enabled the trucker to distance themselves from their “normal” food culture and (re)discover specific food dishes and foodways with an external perspective. This trucker is making burgers with Malaysian flavours and style (Ramlee burger), which is regarded as an innovation for the food heritage of Malaysia. Nasi Goreng Truck moved both spatially and occupationally, shifting its street hawker business to a food truck from Perak to KL: *“Three years ago, I started with a stall in Perak. Then I opened the food truck in KL”* (Nasi Goreng Truck).

Two of the truckers spent time overseas for studies and employment before coming into this industry as explained here:

“I just got back from a hotel job in Dubai and I started the food truck business with a main menu of Nasi Lemak in October 2019.” (Nasi Lemak Truck)

“We did a food business while studying in Japan for four years since 2011. I came back from Japan for good in 2015, and started ‘Tokyo burger’ in 2017.”
(Burger Express)

During the time abroad, they experienced different food cultures, defining what is specific to their food culture and foodways which contributes to food heritage-making through a process of differentiation and assertion. The statements given allude that they are still tied to their food culture and foodways even when they were away in another country, encouraging them to open their own food business with a local menu in Malaysia. The spatial mobility of truckers also contributes to

innovations as they continuously invent something new by combining local dishes and international dishes which they have learnt in other countries: *“We now offer burger with Japanese and Malaysian taste (Ramlee burger and street burgers). The recipes are from Japan, making our burger unique”* (Burger Express).

A few of the operators were street hawkers who shifted to food truck business with either the same menu or a modified menu. It is interesting to see how hawkers selling street foods transformed into food truckers, leading to functional innovation in terms of street food and heritage.

Host-Guest Interactions Lead to Food Heritage-Making and Innovations Regarding the Food System, Culinary Space and Consumption Patterns of the Malaysian ‘Food Social Space’

The study participants agreed that host-guest interactions at TAPAK contribute to food heritage-making & innovations in the Malaysian “food social space”. Food truckers, operate in different locations, meet different types of guests (local or tourists) and hence, experience varied host-guest interactions. Local and international guests interact with hosts differently as shared by these truckers:

“The local people do not talk much as they know what to eat from our menu. However, foreigners like to know about where we are from and our religion when ordering the food or waiting for their food being prepared.”
(9th Valley)

“Some of them talk about the ingredients of the food. They ask us what the specialty is, is it the patty or the bun, which one is the most famous.”
(Burger Express)

Unlike locals, tourists interact more with truckers as they are curious about the local ingredients used in cooking. In the same way, the truckers obtain feedback on their food quality and offering, as implied here:

“Some come here for the food but most of them come for the experience, combining the night life, street food and a good ambience and they can also see how Malaysian everyday love to eat outside in an open environment and hang around.” (TAPAK owner)

This suggests that the food or cuisine by itself may not be the only attraction as guests enjoy a combination of street night life, street food and open-air setting. According to the representative of Tourism Selangor: *“Tourists like to ask more regarding food such as how is the food (spicy or non-spicy), they interact to modify or alter*

the menu". This suggests that tourists at food truck parks interact with truckers to make slight modifications to their dishes, leading to product innovations.

Food Heritage-Making and Innovations from Food Truckers Contribute to the Promotion of Malaysian Tourism by Institutional Stakeholders

Food truckers contribute to food heritage as people can taste various local foods under one roof as the operators commented:

"Food trucks are a one stop center for heritage foods as well as international cuisine." (The Burger Spot)

"When guests interact with the truckers, they ask about local food, their ingredients, their cooking methods, and how local people eat. Thus, it promotes the Malaysian foodways." (The Churros Truck)

People come to the food truck locations to learn about the Malaysian foodways such as how certain foods are eaten, what are the ingredients, and the serving styles. Food truckers serve *nasi lemak* in disposal plates instead of banana leaves, and *teh tarik* is made in a mixer machine instead of manually. The guests interact with vendors to learn about food culture and street food identity. Moreover, it is very interesting to see how few food truckers define food heritage as "fusion" food: *"We offer fusion food of Italian and Malaysian. We are not considering this as heritage foods but we are offering burgers with a Malaysian taste to people"* (9th Valley).

TAPAK agents consider food trucks as part of the food heritage promotion: *"TAPAK has collaborated with the Malaysian tourism players to constantly promote the Malaysian food culture and street culture"* (Cheese Hut). Also, the truckers view food trucks as a contributor to the promotion of the intangible food heritage, as well as the *lepak* and street culture. The guests can engage in the *lepak* culture where locals can sit in the open air and eat street food as described here: *"We have a lepak culture which means people like to go out with their family and friends, eat outside in open air rather than in a restaurant"* (Cheese Hut).

As an institutional stakeholder, the representative from Tourism Selangor stated: *"Heritage-making of Malaysian food can be enhanced only through interactions as it shows people how diversified Malaysian food, foodways and culture can be"*. Thus, host-guest interactions play an important role in promoting food heritage to guests at food truck parks. The TAPAK owner agreed with this, explaining that social interactions can be beneficial for the guests as they can see the cooking methods and interact on this topic. However, the representative of KLFTEA argued: *"If food trucks are to be a part of food heritage-making, they should portray how it looks, served and eaten*

traditionally, also the cooking method of it". It should be noted here that the dishes offered by food truckers are not promoting food defined as local or Malaysian foods but, they are contributing to the promotion of the *lepak* culture and foodways.

Discussion

Food trucks in Klang Valley are a different type of street food hawkers, providing a variety of food cuisine. In line with Ahmad, Esman, and Hashim (2017) as well as Yoon and Chung (2018), findings confirm that food trucks provide *lepak* spots for street dining at the heart of the city, as food trucks provide innovative and unique dining atmospheres and food experiences. The spatial mobility of the truckers facilitate street food and hawker innovations, linking them to the foodways of Malaysian food culture as well as sharing it with the guests. The spatial mobility also contributes to food heritage-making and innovations as when they move around, truckers discover specific characteristics of their food culture and cooking methods as well as invent something new, combining international and local tastes, to redefine food heritage. This finding confirms Ursache's work (2015) that found mobility provides opportunities to identify, preserve and promote cultural and natural heritage.

Food truckers provide an interactive environment for hosts and guests which corroborates with Yoon & Chung (2018), who found that food trucks' distinguishing feature is its innovative and interactive atmosphere. According to Souza and Lucena (2020), food truck parks are the best spot for gathering together for food and interactions. Host-guest interactions also lead to functional innovations in food heritage through the modification of food ingredients. This finding is aligned with Hawk (2013) as well as Souza and Lucena (2020) who found that food truckers allow customers to engage with them to improve food offerings.

Host-guest interactions enable the sharing of food practices or foodways with guests, according to food truckers. Guests, on the other hand, can document their experiences online and recommend to others the local food and food culture that they have enjoyed. Thus, interactions at food truck parks in Klang Valley can aid in tourism promotion. Everett (2012) also highlighted that food tourism provides a new dimension to re-visit dominant discourses, in examining social interactions. Food truckers contribute to product innovations by combining local dishes with flavours and tastes to suit guests' palate (fusion foods) and in turn, represent their cultural foods. However, there is a lack of recognition from institutional stakeholders, especially Tourism Selangor, on the contributions of food truckers to tourism promotion through food heritage-making and innovations in food system, culinary space and consumption patterns of Malaysian food culture.

Conclusion

Contributions of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to the empirical literature on heritage tourism studies. Within tourism studies, food trucks are a tourist attraction through the promotion of local foods and foodways such as the *lepak* and street food culture. Within heritage studies, food trucks in this study are demonstrated as a stakeholder in the food heritage-making process as well as complementing innovation in foodways. Additionally, this study established specific Malaysian foodways at food truck parks, proving that host-guest interactions and spatial mobilities contribute to the heritage-making of Malaysian foodways. There are promising indications that expert stakeholders are recognising the valuable role of food trucks in local food promotions at present and in the future. Finally, this article contributes by highlighting the food truck players in the tourism industry as they facilitate the introduction of tangible and intangible food heritage, that is, the *lepak* culture and local food dishes to guests.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

The guests of food truck parks were not interviewed due to time constraint and feasibility reasons. In this regard, future research could provide a more detailed look into guests' perceptions of host-guest interactions at food truck parks by including them as study participants. From the literature, it is known that the promotion of food heritage invites the spatial mobility of tourists. Thus, future studies might extend the explanations of its contribution to food heritage-making. In addition, the effect of COVID-19 on the *lepak* and street food culture at food truck parks might prove an important area for future research as well.

Recommendations for the Food Truck Sector and Tourism Industry

In this study, it was found that the majority of the food truckers in the Klang Valley either offer international food or fusion food. KLFTEA and TAPAK could encourage food truckers to promote more local foods that could represent the Malaysian food culture. They could also provide training to food truckers to further educate them on promoting Malaysian foodways as part of the food heritage. Also, since food trucks make food truck parks lively through the *lepak* culture, this can be included in the placemaking strategy of Klang Valley to help build its brand identity. The tourism industry can also place more emphasis on this sector to integrate it into the overall branding of Klang Valley, since food trucks are a vital element in many events or festivals to present unique local food to tourists.

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