The Importance of Food Hygiene in Building Customer Trust and Repurchase Intentions in Bangkok Street Food for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

This empirical study investigated the impact of perceived food hygiene on customer repurchase intentions in the street food business in Bangkok and the mediation of customer trust as its mechanism. This quantitative research employed stratified random sampling, ensuring that the sample is a good representation of the population of interest. Survey data were collected from 477 street food customers in Bangkok and were computed using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicated that perceived food hygiene directly impacts customer repurchase intentions and trust, and customer trust positively influences repurchase intentions. As a result, Sobel's test results showed partial positive moderation of customer trust between perceived food hygiene and repurchase intentions. The findings confirmed the necessity of food hygiene in promoting customer trust and repurchase intentions and the role of customer trust as the mechanism of how food hygiene promotes customer repurchase intentions. The research also provided helpful guidelines for street food operators and relevant government units and authorities assigned to develop and raise standards to improve the street food industry, following sustainable development goals to provide a higher standard of living for people.

Keywords: Perceived Hygiene, Customer Repurchase Intentions, Customer Trust, Street Food

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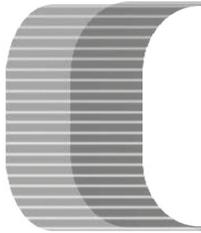
ความสำคัญของสุขอนามัยอาหารในการสร้างความไว้วางใจของลูกค้าและความตั้งใจซื้อคืนอาหารริมถนนในกรุงเทพฯ

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้ศึกษาผลกระทบของการรับรู้สุขอนามัยอาหารต่อความตั้งใจซื้อซ้ำและบทบาทสื่อกลางของความไว้วางใจของลูกค้าในธุรกิจอาหารข้างทางในกรุงเทพมหานคร การวิจัยเชิงปริมาณนี้ใช้การสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบแบ่งชั้นเพื่อให้มั่นใจว่าตัวอย่างเป็นตัวแทนที่ดีของประชากรที่สนใจ ข้อมูลการสำรวจรวบรวมจากลูกค้าร้านอาหารข้างทาง 477 รายในกรุงเทพฯ และคำนวณโดยใช้แบบจำลองสมการโครงสร้างกำลังสองน้อยที่สุดบางส่วน (PLS-SEM) ผลการวิจัยพบว่า การรับรู้ถึงสุขอนามัยอาหารมีผลกระทบเชิงบวกเชิงประจักษ์ต่อความตั้งใจซื้อคืนของลูกค้าและลูกค้า ความไว้วางใจของลูกค้ายังช่วยส่งเสริมความตั้งใจในการซื้อคืนในเชิงบวกอีกด้วย ผลการทดสอบของ Sobel แสดงให้เห็นถึงการกลั่นกรองเชิงบวกบางส่วนต่อความไว้วางใจของลูกค้าระหว่างการรับรู้ด้านสุขอนามัยอาหารและความตั้งใจในการซื้อคืน ผลการวิจัยยืนยันความจำเป็นของสุขอนามัยอาหารในการส่งเสริมความไว้วางใจของลูกค้าและความตั้งใจในการซื้อคืน และบทบาทของความไว้วางใจของลูกค้าในฐานะกลไกในการที่สุขอนามัยอาหารส่งเสริมความตั้งใจของลูกค้าในการซื้อคืน การวิจัยยังให้แนวทางที่เป็นประโยชน์สำหรับผู้ประกอบการอาหารริมทางและหน่วยงานภาครัฐและหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องที่ได้รับมอบหมายให้พัฒนาและยกระดับมาตรฐานเพื่อปรับปรุงอุตสาหกรรมอาหารริมทางโดยปฏิบัติตามเป้าหมายการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืนเพื่อมอบมาตรฐานการครองชีพที่สูงขึ้นสำหรับประชาชน

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Introduction

With the issues happening around the world, such as the COVID-19 pandemic that has killed millions of people worldwide (Yamin, 2020), global warming causing sudden and massive unexpected climate changes that have also caused people to lose their homes and loved ones, and many others (Zandalinas, Fritschi, & Mittler, 2021) that lead to economic instability that affects people's quality of life, the global trend of sustainability has become popular and broadly discussed in various aspects (Ruggerio, 2021). These issues and concerns have been categorized and titled by the United Nations (UN) into 17 sustainable development goals (FUND, 2015; Hák, Janoušková, & Moldan, 2016; Ruggerio, 2021). In light of the widespread adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) worldwide, governments and individuals are encouraged to embrace sustainable initiatives. These efforts aim to achieve the 17 goals set forth, which include ending poverty, improving health and education, reducing inequality, fostering economic growth, addressing climate change, and conserving our oceans and forests. (Alamoush, Ballini, & Ölçer, 2021; Biermann, Kanie, & Kim, 2017). Several industries and businesses have widely adopted the SDGs concept to compensate for its megatrend (Mio, Panfilo, & Blundo, 2020; Pedersen, 2018; Van Tulder, 2018). Among industries, businesses in the foodservice industry have adopted and applied SDGs concept in their actions, such as providing environmentally friendly food containers and utensils and banding foam and plastics, treating water before releasing it to the public, exploiting clean alternative energies, and many more (de Visser-Amundson, 2022; Nicholls, Ely, Birkin, Basu, & Goulson, 2020; Teixeira et al., 2020).

After the struggling years of the restaurant business worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants have started to recover (Occhiogrosso, 2022; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2023; The Foreign Agricultural Service, 2020). In Thailand, one segment of the foodservice industry that has demonstrated a quicker recovery compared to others is the street food sector. It provides affordable local cuisine, catering to the majority who continue to face challenges stemming from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (KasikornResearchCenter, 2021, 2022). Street food yields millions of lives, both consumers and street food operators (MAGLUMTONG & FUKUSHIMA, 2022; Statista, 2023). It was anticipated that the street food industry would experience growth and yield increased revenue compared to the period before the pandemic (Kasikorn Research Center, 2022). According to Statista (2022), in 2019, Thailand had

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111,370 registered street food operators. In 2021. its market value was 180 million Baht and is anticipated to reach 186 million Baht in 2022 (Statista, 2022). These numbers, even though unregistered street vendors are not included, reflect the attractiveness and competition in this business. With low entry barriers, street food is always on the top of mind for people who want to start a business (Ratasuk & Charoensukmongkol, 2019, 2020; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2023). Moreover, the street food industry, upon which millions rely, is a testament to the local economy's resilience in alignment with key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These include eradicating poverty, eliminating hunger, promoting good health and well-being, fostering decent work and economic growth, and cultivating sustainable cities and communities (Winarno & Allain, 1991).

Consequently, competitive edges allowing street food operators to compete with rivals, survive in such competition, and grow sustainably are required. Besides attracting new customers to their businesses, street food operators need to ensure they will come back and support their businesses to achieve sustainable success in operating a business. Therefore, it is essential for street vendors and relevant stakeholders, including governmental bodies responsible for nurturing the street food industry and local economic development, to understand the factors that influence customers' inclination to repurchase street food while promoting better living quality of people aligning with the sustainability concepts of SDGs mentioned.

Given the heightened awareness of health prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns surrounding food hygiene in street food have gained considerable attention, particularly in underdeveloped and developing countries (Esposito et al., 2021; Letuka, Nkhebenyane, & Thekisoe, 2021; Soon, 2019). Although government agencies encourage street food operators to learn and adopt food hygiene practices in Thailand, evidence of unhygienic practices remains. Thus, it is proposed to be investigated as a potential factor that can drive street food customers' repurchase intentions.

Even though the concept of food hygiene has been studied in several contexts, including the street food industry (Frempong, Charles-Unadike, Anaman-Torgbor, & Tarkang, 2022; Okojie & Isah, 2019; Soon, 2019), Quantitative research examining the influence of food hygiene on repurchase intentions remains a few, with the majority of existing studies being

qualitative, and need further investigations (Kamboj, Gupta, Bandral, Gandotra, & Anjum, 2020; Lema, Abuhay, Kindie, Dagne, & Guadu, 2020; Ratasuk, 2023). For example, the research by Wardana, Sulhaini, and Rinuastuti (2022) quantitively examined the mediating role of food hygiene on the influence of content marketing on customers' fast food purchase intentions moderated by health risks. Another quantitative research on the contribution of hygiene was conducted by Yu, Seo, and Hyun (2021), who investigated perceived hygiene's impact on image, WOM, and customer revisit intentions in the hotel business. This gap is particularly evident in Bangkok's street food scene, where skepticism regarding food hygiene persists, highlighting the need for further investigation.

This research investigated the roles of Bangkok street food customers' perceived food hygiene on their repurchase intentions, direct and via trust, based on social exchange theory. Its findings are expected to provide novel knowledge and additional evidence on food hygiene, customer trust, perceived risk, social exchange theory, and street food literature. These insights are anticipated to serve as valuable guidelines for street food operators, enhancing their competitiveness and contributing to the sustainable growth of the local economy.

Literature Review

This study investigates how perceived food hygiene influences customer repurchase intentions and explores the mediating effect of customer trust, as proposed by the social exchange theory. The research model comprises three latent variables: customer repurchase intentions, perceived food hygiene, and customer trust, aiming to elucidate their connections based on hypotheses derived from the principles of social exchange theory responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), set forth by the United Nations, providing a comprehensive framework for addressing global challenges, including those related to food safety, health, and sustainable consumption (Grace, 2017). In the bustling metropolis of Bangkok, street food vendors play a vital role in the local food ecosystem, offering diverse culinary delights to residents and tourists alike. However, food hygiene and safety concerns can significantly impact customer trust and repurchase intentions. This literature review explores the nexus between food hygiene, customer trust, and repurchase intentions in Bangkok street food, with a focus on achieving SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) (MAGLUMTONG & FUKUSHIMA, 2022; Nizame et al., 2019).

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Social Exchange Theory

In his influential article "Social Behavior as Exchange," American sociologist George Homans introduced the pioneering social exchange theory (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). According to the theory, individuals continually evaluate costs and benefits when initiating or ending a relationship. As long as the benefits exceed the costs, the relationship persists, driven by the pursuit of rewards and avoidance of punishment rather than being solely influenced by emotions (Cook et al., 2013; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange theory has been applied in diverse fields and contexts, particularly in business studies that it can explain relationships between businesses and their customers that their relationships are developed as a result of their cost and benefit analysis to determine potential risks and benefits (Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022; Romani-Dias & Carneiro, 2020; Shiau & Luo, 2012; Xu, Wang, & Ma, 2022). The theory suggests that consumers establish relationships with businesses not solely based on emotions but through a cost-benefit analysis determining whether they choose to engage with a business as customers, remain in current relationships, or opt to switch to others (Cortez & Johnston, 2020; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2023; Wang, Xiang, Yang, & Ma, 2019). For example, research by Ratasuk (2022a) employed social exchange theory to establish a framework for how marketing factors contribute to customer loyalty via brand image in convenience store coffee chains. Verma (2021) also used the theory to explain the contributions of brand engagement and brand love on brand equity and purchase intention. This study utilized the social exchange theory to predict the connection between perceived food hygiene and customer repurchase intentions while also exploring the mediating influence of customer trust within the street food context for hypothesis formulation.

Repurchase Intentions

Repurchase intention encompasses individuals' inclination and subjective likelihood to persist in purchasing products or services from the same businesses (Kotler, 2012; Morrison, 1979). It is a critical phase in the consumer decision-making journey after customers experience products or services in the purchase decision stage, as shown in Figure 1 (Ratasuk, 2019; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2020). In the post-purchase behavior stage, the last stage, customers assess their experiences with products and services to decide

whether to continue their purchases or switch to other businesses. (Ratasuk, 2022b). Repurchase intention has been verified in business studies as a key to favorable business consequences, such as brand loyalty and word-of-mouth intentions, indicating business sustainability (Dandis & Al Haj Eid, 2022; Hussain et al., 2023; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022). On the other hand, marketing factors, such as perceived product quality, perceived service quality, customer trust, and many others, have been proposed and tested as antecedents of customer repurchase intentions in various business contexts (Ratasuk, 2022b; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2020, 2022). For example, the research by Mio et al. (2020) examined the impacts of customers' perceived value, satisfaction, and trust on their repurchase intentions in the B to C online segment and found positive significant effects. Trivedi and Yadav (2020) also found the empirical mediation roles of customer trust and customer satisfaction on the impacts of certain characteristics of vendors, including security, ease of use, and privacy concerns, on the repurchase intentions of Y-generation e-commerce customers.
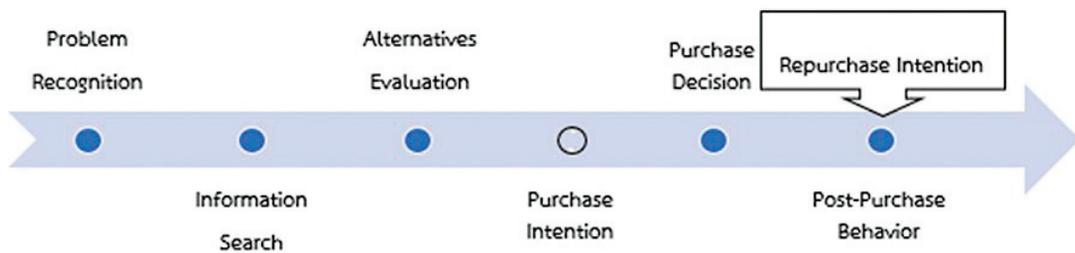

Figure 1: The Consumer Decision-Making Process, Retrieved from Ratasuk and Gajesanand (2022)

Perceived Food Hygiene

Food hygiene is defined as practices, methods, and disciplines reflecting physical conditions and evidence presented in the food production process, including handling, preparing, and storing food, controlling pathogen transferring risk to prevent possible foodborne illnesses and infectious diseases caused by microbial contamination (Baral, Moon, Shin, Pahari, & Acharya, 2020; Kamboj et al., 2020; Tomaszewska, Trafialek, Suebpongsang, & Kolanowski, 2018). Food hygiene is part of food safety, and it is not easy to consider them separately that food safety includes the entire system of risk management while food hygiene covers only a set of practices controlling only an aspect of food safety (Ababio &

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Lovatt, 2015; Egan et al., 2007; Kamboj et al., 2020). It can determine the degree of food safety and risk (Bloomfield & Ackerley, 2023). In contrast with food safety, food hygiene is very limited in the literature, particularly in social studies (Ababio & Lovatt, 2015; Djekic et al., 2014; Kamboj et al., 2020). For example, the study by Choi, MacLaurin, Cho, and Hahm (2010) and (2021) revealed that perceived food hygiene positively influences various outcomes, including cognitive and affective perceptions and customer satisfaction.

Customer Trust

Customer Trust refers to customers' positive belief and expectation developed over time that businesses and their products and services are reliable and always fulfill their obligations to satisfy their needs and expectations (Jalilvand, Vosta, Mahyari, & Pool, 2017; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022, 2023; Shao & Yin, 2019). It depends on businesses' ability to develop customers' decent experiences and emotional connections with them, allowing them to be confident in themselves and what they offer (Guo, Hu, Lu, & Ma, 2021; Li, Teng, & Chen, 2020). It can determine various desired business solutions, such as brand engagement, purchase intentions, repurchase intentions, customer loyalty, and many more (Firman, Ilyas, Reza, Lestari, & Putra, 2021; Islam et al., 2021; Kartika, Firdaus, & Najib, 2020; Li et al., 2020). For example, Dehghanpouri, Soltani, and Rostamzadeh (2020) study revealed that customer trust impacts taxpayer satisfaction and e-CRM success in East Azerbaijan, Iran. Iglesias, Markovic, Bagherzadeh, and Singh (2020) explored the role of customer trust on customer loyalty and found its significant contribution to Spain's e-business. On the other hand, given in prior research, customer trust is a consequence of various marketing and business factors, such as marketing mix, customer satisfaction, and food safety (Halizah, Retnowati, Darmawan, Khayru, & Issalillah, 2022; Islam et al., 2021; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2023; Shao & Yin, 2019). Ye, Ying, Zhou, and Wang (2019) identified noteworthy positive effects of social connection, usefulness, and ease of use on the establishment of customer trust among P2P accommodation users in China. According to Ratasuk and Gajesanand (2022), food safety assurance cultivates customer trust, whereas trust may manifest through perceived risk within Bangkok's food delivery sector. The study by Islam et al. (2021) also highlighted that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices and customer satisfaction play instrumental

roles in cultivating trust among post-paid users in the telecommunications sector. Within the scope of this research, customer trust is delineated as the assurance perceived by consumers in street food vendors, reflecting their confidence that the offerings and services provided will meet expectations and circumvent dissatisfaction.

Perceived Food Hygiene and Repurchase Intentions and the Mediating Role of Customer Trust

Based on the social exchange theory, customers always compare the costs and benefits of their experience with the products and services they have purchased, reflecting risk and benefits or repeating their purchase with a business (Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022). Thus, customers perceived food hygiene from their previous purchase, which is expected to keep their foods clean and prevent them from foodborne illnesses and infectious diseases (Baral et al., 2020; Kamboj et al., 2020; Tomaszewska et al., 2018), establishing their trust on the food and the business that they will be safe and drive them to repurchase foods from the same street vendors (Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022, 2023). Ratasuk and Gajesanand (2022) found a significant positive impact of food safety, which is the bigger picture of food hygiene, on food delivery customers' repurchase intentions in Bangkok. Moreover, perceived food hygiene makes customers feel more confident in foods and services, particularly in the current situation that people are still conscious of the risk of COVID-19, which is an airborne disease, that the food is safe to consume (Morawska et al., 2020; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2023). Consequently, customers' trust in the foods and services of street food vendors drives them to continue to support the businesses (Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022). For example, the study by Ratasuk and Gajesanand (2022) also found that trust promotes food delivery customers' repurchase intentions. Wandoko and Panggati (2022) uncovered a beneficial impact of customer trust on online repurchase intentions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Miao et al. (2022), customer trust significantly influences tourist repurchase intentions in Thailand. Thereby, the following hypotheses were proposed.

H1: Perceived food hygiene has a positive impact on customer repurchase intentions.

H2: Perceived food hygiene has a positive association with customer trust.

H3: The association between perceived food hygiene and repurchase intentions is positively mediated by customer trust.

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Methodology

This study investigates perceived food hygiene's influence on street food customers' repurchase intentions in Bangkok while delving into the mediating role of trust in street food vendors. With a cross-sectional quantitative research design, the study utilized self-administered questionnaires to collect data from a targeted population of street food customers in Bangkok. Sampling was conducted using a stratified random sampling method to ensure adequate representation, with a sample size exceeding 400 participants, as Lilliefors (1967) and Chaokromthong and Sintao (2021) recommended. The study strategically divided Bangkok into five districts and approached 120 qualified street food customers from each district, totaling 600 individuals (Iliyasu & Etikan, 2021; Kadilar & Cingi, 2003). Data collection spanned a month from early May to early June 2023. The survey instruments comprised two parts: the first captured participant demographics, while the second encompassed question sets assessing attitudes towards latent variables. Cover letters accompanied the questionnaires, outlining the study's objectives and providing instructions for completion. Respondents were approached right after their purchase by a street food vendor and were informed of all rights and conditions in detail before being invited to respond to the questionnaires voluntarily. Each respondent took roughly 5 to 10 minutes.

The data collection took about two months, which was longer than expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in targeted prospects' hesitation to participate in the study.

Measures

The latent variables were assessed using scales derived from prior research, which have been established as valid and reliable (Guo et al., 2021; Li et al., 2020; Nazir, Khadim, Asadullah, & Syed, 2023; Trivedi & Yadav, 2020; Yu et al., 2021). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' All questionnaire items were translated into Thai to ensure cultural appropriateness and facilitate comprehension among the sample group.

Repurchase intention was assessed employing a four-item scale adapted from Trivedi and Yadav (2020) and Nazir et al. (2023). Sample items include "If I had to buy street food again, I would support the shop I bought from." and "I will be buying food from the same restaurant again soon."

Perceived food hygiene was assessed employing the five-item perceived food hygiene scale adapted from Wardana et al. (2022) and Yu et al. (2021). Sample question items are "The street food vendor providers wear masks. or mouth covering to prevent saliva at all times" and "The food here is clean and hygienic with no unwanted impurities."

Customer trust was measured using the four-item scale adapted from Guo et al. (2021); Li et al. (2020), for example, "I trust the food of this street food vendor." and "I feel that I can rely on this street food vendor."

Control Variable

This study incorporated four control variables, gender, age, income, and education, to augment the model, offering supplementary factors alongside the latent variables.

Data Analysis

This study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess the proposed hypotheses. According to Hair Jr, Howard, and Nitzl (2020), PLS-SEM offers advantages over CB-SEM as it does not necessitate normally distributed data for accurate results, thus minimizing bias when dealing with non-normally distributed data. Furthermore, Hair Jr, Matthews, Matthews, and Sarstedt (2017) asserted that PLS-SEM is adept at handling complex research models characterized by numerous variables and intricate relationships necessitating simultaneous analysis. WarpPLS 8.0 software, the latest version available, was selected to execute the analysis for its ability to generate precise results. However, preceding the PLS-SEM analysis, various statistical tests, including descriptive statistics, convergent and discriminant validity assessments, reliability checks, multicollinearity examination, common method bias detection, normality assessment, and model-fit indices evaluation, were conducted to ensure the robustness of the research model and the validity of its findings. Finally, the Sobel test, advocated by Hayes and Preacher (2014), was utilized to explore moderation effects.

The data collection methodology and instrument underwent a rigorous review process to ensure alignment with the ethical standards outlined by the Research Ethics Committee (REC), resulting in the assignment of reference number PIM-REC 036/2563.

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Results

Of all six hundred respondents, 477 valid questionnaires were collected and included in the data processing, presenting a response rate of 79.5%. Most respondents were female, 334 (70.02%), while most respondents, 412 (86.37%), were 20 to 25 years old. Almost half of the respondents, 228 (47.80%), earned less than 15,000 Baht monthly, and 280 (58.70%) had undergraduate degrees, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

	Characteristics	Descriptive Statistics
Gender	Male	143 (29.98%)
	Female	334 (70.02%)
Age	20-25 years old	412 (86.37%)
	26-30 years old	41 (8.60%)
	31-35 years old	11 (2.30%)
	36-40 years old	10 (2.10%)
	41-49 years old	2 (0.42 %)
	Older than 50 years old	1 (0.21%)
Income (per month)	Less than 15,000 Baht	228 (47.80%)
	15,001 to 20,000 Baht	199 (41.72%)
	20,001 to 30,000 Baht	34 (7.13%)
	30,001 to 40,000 Baht	8 (1.68%)
	40,001 to 50,000 Baht	2 (0.42%)
	More than 50,000 Baht	6 (1.25%)
Education	High school	14 (2.93%)
	Associate degree	118 (24.74%)
	Undergraduate degree	280 (58.70%)
	Master degree	54 (11.33%)
	Doctoral degree	11 (2.30%)

Prior to the SEM analysis, criteria should be met. Convergent and discriminant validity, reliability, and model fit indices were tested. Firstly, the convergent validity was tested by considering the factor loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) presented in Table 2. All factor loadings range from 0.835 to 0.931. According to Hair Jr et al. (2020), convergent validity is ideal if all factor loadings are at least 0.7. Table 2 also shows that the AVE of the result range from 0.757 to 0.833, more significant than 0.5, indicating less error remains, while the lowest CR value is 0.940, higher than 0.7 to be satisfactory (Hair et al., 2011; Hair Jr et al., 2020). Therefore, the convergent validity of the data is satisfactory.

Table 2: Convergent Validity (Factor Loadings, AVE, and CR)

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	CR	AVE
Repur	If I had to buy street food again, I would support the shop I bought from.	0.901	0.940	0.797
	If I could, I would buy food from the same store on my next purchase.	0.910		
	I intend to buy food from the same restaurant in the future.	0.876		
	I will be buying food from the same restaurant again soon.	0.884		
Hygiene	The street food vendor providers wear masks. or mouth covering to prevent saliva at all times	0.885	0.940	0.757
	The food here is clean and hygienic, with no unwanted impurities.	0.894		
	The street food vendor wears aprons and/or gloves, and/or hair caps at all times.	0.894		
	The street food vendor does not constantly take risks with their food, such as picking their nose or wiping their hands and pants while cooking.	0.839		
	The street food stall is clean and hygienic.	0.835		
Trust	Overall, I have complete trust in this street food vendor.	0.889	0.952	0.833
	I feel that this street food vendor is trustworthy (honest, not deceptive).	0.909		
	I feel that I can rely on this street food vendor.	0.931		
	I trust the food of this street food vendor.	0.922		

Note: CR=composite reliability, AVE=average variance extracted, Repur=repurchase intentions, Hygiene=perceived food hygiene, Trust=customer trust

Secondly, discriminant validity was evaluated through the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). As depicted in Table 3, the results demonstrate conformity to the HTMT criterion, with all values falling below the recommended threshold of 0.90, as Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) advocated.

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Table 3: HTMT Ratio

HTMT	Repur	Hygiene	Trust
Repur			
Hygiene	0.614**		
Trust	0.871**	0.656**	

Note: * p-value of ≤0.05, ** p-value of <0.01; Repur=repurchase intentions, Hygiene=perceived food hygiene,
Trust =customer trust, GEN=gender, Age=age, Income=income, Edu=education

Furthermore, discriminant validity was assessed by ensuring that the square root values of each variable's average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded their corresponding correlations with other variables, as Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019) recommended. As depicted in Table 4, all AVEs surpassed their respective correlations, signifying satisfactory discriminant validity. Subsequently, the model's reliability was examined, with variables' Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability coefficients assessed to be no less than 0.7, as Manley, Hair, Williams, and McDowell (2021) suggested. As indicated in Table 4, all coefficients fell within the range of 0.915 to 1.000, underscoring the model's reliability. Finally, multicollinearity and common method bias (CMB) were evaluated using the complete variance inflation factor (VIF), with values ideally not exceeding 3.3 and acceptably not exceeding 5 (Hair Jr et al., 2020; Kock & Lynn, 2012; Senaviratna & Cooray, 2019). The highest full VIF value observed was 3.039, well below the threshold of 3.3, indicating the absence of critical multicollinearity and CMB concerns.

Table 4: Correlations, Reliability, and Full Collinearity VIF.

Variables	Repur	Hygiene	Trust	Gen	Age	Income	Edu
Repur	(0.893)						
Hygiene	0.563**	(0.870)					
Trust	0.805**	0.608**	(0.913)				
Gen	-0.200**	-0.102*	-0.113*	(1.000)			
Age	-0.025	-0.044	-0.052	0.126**	(1.000)		
Income	-0.041	-0.096*	-0.021	0.224**	0.225**	(1.000)	
Edu	0.123**	0.038	0.082	-0.113*	-0.066	0.080	(1.000)
Cronbach's alpha coefficient	0.940	0.940	0.952	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Composite reliability Coefficient	0.915	0.919	0.933	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Full Collin. VIF	3.039	1.644	3.192	1.122	1.071	1.126	1.044

Note: *p-value of ≤0.05, **p-value of <0.01; Repur=repurchase intentions, Hygiene=perceived food hygiene, Trust =customer trust, GEN=gender, Age=age, Income=income, Edu=education; the square root values of the AVE are presented in parentheses.

Moreover, normality testing was conducted to ascertain the suitability of employing PLS-SEM for this study. As delineated in Table 5, the results indicate non-normal distribution across all variables, thus affirming the appropriateness of PLS-SEM for this research.

Table 5: Normality Test Results

	Repur	Hygiene	Trust	Gen	Age	Income	Edu
Normal-JB	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Normal-RJB	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Note: Repur=repurchase intentions, Hygiene=perceived food hygiene, Trust=customer trust, GEN=gender, Age=age, Income=income, Edu=education

Furthermore, the model's overall quality was substantiated by assessing ten model-fit indices recommended by Kock (2015), as presented in Table 6. The findings reveal that all indices attained optimal and acceptable values, affirming the overall model's favorable quality.

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Table 6: PLE-SEM Model Fit Indices

Model fit indices	Coefficient	Result
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.244***	Significant
Average R-square (ARS)	0.354***	Significant
Average adjusted R-square (AARS)	0.350***	Significant
Average variance inflation factor (AVIF)	1.282	Ideal
Average full variance inflation factor (AFVIF)	1.748	Ideal
Tenenhaus GoF index (GoF)	0.568	Large
Simpson's paradox ratio (SPR)	1.000	Ideal
R-square contribution ratio (RSCR)	1.000	Ideal
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	1.000	Acceptable
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	1.000	Acceptable

Note: ***, **, and * mean a p-value of <0.001, ≤0.01, and ≤0.05, respectively.

PLS-SEM Hypothesis Testing Results

The outcomes of the evaluation of the three proposed hypotheses are depicted in Figure 1 and the subsequent descriptive details.
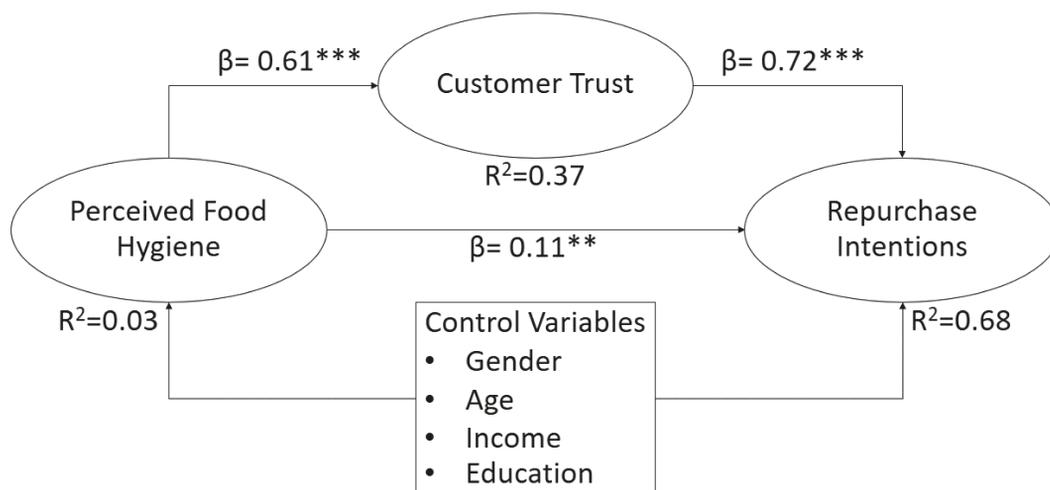

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model Results

Note: ***, **, and *mean a p-value of <0.001, ≤0.01, and ≤0.05, respectively.

Figure 2 presents the PLS-SEM analysis results as follows:

Hypothesis 1 Perceived food hygiene has a positive impact on customer repurchase intentions. The results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between the two variables (β=0.111; p=0.007). Therefore, hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 2 Perceived food hygiene has a positive association with customer trust. The statistical analysis unveiled a noteworthy and positive relationship between the two variables (β=0.611; p<0.001), confirming hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 The association between perceived food hygiene and repurchase intentions is positively mediated by customer trust. The outcomes derived from conducting the Sobel test, as suggested by Hayes and Preacher (2014), in conjunction with the findings related to hypothesis 1, demonstrated a partially mediating impact on the association between perceived food hygiene and purchase intentions (t=11.193; p<0.001) aligning with the bootstrapping result (β=0.442; p<0.001) suggested by Preacher and Leonardelli (2001). As a result, hypothesis 3 was substantiated.

In addition, the results demonstrated that, among the four control variables, gender, age, income, and education, only gender (β=-0.075; p=0.050) and education (β=0.096; p=0.017) significantly impacted perceived food hygiene, and only gender (β=-0.098; p=0.016) significantly impacted repurchase intentions.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study looked at how consumer trust functions as a mediating factor in the relationship between food cleanliness and repurchase intentions in the street food industry in Bangkok. Results show that consumers who feel that street food vendors have high standards for food hygiene are more likely to repeat purchases from them than customers who feel that street food vendors have low standards. This is consistent with earlier research by Ratasuk and Gajesanand (2022), which found that customers' intentions to make repeat purchases from food delivery services in Bangkok were significantly impacted by their perception of food safety. However, no previous studies have examined the relationship between perceived food hygiene and purchase intentions. Additionally, it supports the findings of research by Cui, Jiang, Deng, and Zhang (2019) and Hsu, Chang, and Lin (2019)

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that food safety influences consumers' inclinations to buy from online food marketplaces and organic food producers. The result may be due to the fast-growing health concerns influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic that perceived food hygiene, for example, street food operators' personal hygiene, food handling process, and physical evidence, may make customers feel safer with their street food consumption. The results also indicated that perceived food hygiene promotes customer trust, supporting prior research, such as the study of Wandoko and Panggati (2022), that customer trust is associated with repurchase intentions in online shopping e-marketplaces during COVID-19. In addition, Miao et al. (2022) discovered a strong correlation between customer trust and travelers' intentions to make additional purchases in Thailand. The Sobel test's mediation finding supported the role of customer trust as the mechanism enabling perceived hygiene to encourage repurchase intentions, consistent with earlier research and the social exchange theory. Positive feelings like trust mediate the link between perceived food hygiene and repurchase intentions. A vendor's capacity to deliver safe and sanitary food is trusted when there is a high perceived level of food hygiene, which increases customer satisfaction with the entire eating experience. This contentment subsequently strengthens customers' plans to make more purchases from the same provider. For instance, Shafieizadeh, Alotaibi, and Tao (2023) found that food hygiene, a component of food safety, increases patron trust in restaurants. Additionally, Ratasuk and Gajesanand (2023) discovered that food safety plays a major role in fostering the trust of meal delivery clients. In the street food context, street vendors with better hygiene tend to gain higher customers' trust than those with poorer food hygiene, fostering their confidence in consuming street food and eventually promoting their repurchase intentions.

Finally, the impact of control factors on food hygiene suggests that female consumers place a higher priority on and are more concerned about food hygiene than their male counterparts. Higher-educated consumers also prioritize and appreciate food hygiene more than lower-educated ones do.

Academic Contributions

Based on the findings, this study adds to the small body of knowledge about how food hygiene influences repurchase intentions. Specifically, few studies use the idea of food hygiene as a latent variable in a quantitative sociological study. Considered a novel

feature of the social exchange theory, this research also adds to the body of information and data about the connections between food hygiene, consumer trust, and repurchase intentions based on the theory's explanation in the literature. It also deepens our understanding of how customer trust is influenced by food hygiene, how trust affects repurchase intentions in the food sector and the limited roles that consumer trust plays as a mediator in the relationship between perceived food hygiene and buying intentions. Furthermore, this study offers more factual support for each of the correlations.

Suggested Implications

Additionally, street food vendors and other pertinent industry players, such as government agencies tasked with advancing the street food sector and boosting the regional economy, can benefit from the research's practical consequences. To develop consumers' faith and trust that their food is safe and free from infectious illnesses and foodborne sickness, street food vendors should have their booths tidy and appealing. For example, they should constantly have their areas neat and organized. They should cover their food to prevent it from being contaminated with dirt from the street and the foul air around them. Additionally, operators should dress smartly and professionally when cooking, wearing acceptable, appropriate clothing, including hats or hair nets, gloves, aprons, masks, and frequent hand washing to avoid contaminating the food. Because it's hard to get clean water at the location, use disposable food containers and utensils instead of ones that need to be washed. Customers should feel more confident, their repurchase intents and company competitiveness should grow.

Regarding any pertinent government agencies working to assist the sector in reaching long-term objectives that might lead to economic success, they should push street food vendors to learn more about industry standards and best practices, especially concerning food cleanliness. They can arrange for the operators to receive free training and certification. The course can be offered annually, and the certifications earned can be used to guarantee the store's standard cleanliness. They are good for a year or longer, after which they must recertify through another training course. It is anticipated that these steps would strengthen the allure of Thai street food and sustainably advance food safety in the street food industry, drawing tourists from across the globe and bringing in additional revenue to the country and the local businesses.

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Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Studies

There are still several limits even if this study makes significant contributions, such as offering fresh insights and proof for the body of literature already in existence, especially with foodservice and street food. The results were limited to identifying associations between factors rather than causality because this study only collected cross-sectional data, making it difficult to confirm causal linkages. Additionally, the self-administered survey used in this study from one data source—street food customers—may have introduced subjectivity into the findings. It is recommended that future related studies gather data from several sources, such as other relevant industry stakeholders, in order to diversify the data sources. Future research should consider additional variables, including consumer trust, loyalty, word-of-mouth, and repurchase intents, that could majorly impact the variables and broaden the body of knowledge and theory. It is also recommended that similar models be investigated in various food service business scenarios in future research.

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