



Factors Influencing the Sustainability of Food Truck Entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay

by

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Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

**Master of Technology: Business Administration (Entrepreneurship) in the Faculty of
Business and Management Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology**

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October 2022

DECLARATION

I, Francois Naudé Loots, declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any other qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Naudé Loots', written over a horizontal line.

Date: 5 October 2022

Abstract:

Within the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality, no record of factors that inhibit the successful pursuit of the food truck business exists. This study closes this gap, as its chief goal was to ascertain the factors influencing the sustainability of food truck entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB). An understanding of the factors will enable prospective and current practitioners in the field to predict the long-term success of their endeavours. New and established food truck entrepreneurs wishing to enter the food truck industry can base their planning and business opportunities on the research conducted. Data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews with seven food truck entrepreneurs from NMB after a point of theoretical saturation was reached. Essentially, the interpretive paradigm was considered most suitable for this study because it sought to understand the perception of food truck entrepreneurs regarding the factors influencing the sustainability of their businesses. The study followed a qualitative analysis in order to explore, understand and describe the findings of the research. An inductive approach was implemented as the research design in order to use the specific data and generalise it to the food truck industry. Reviewing the factors that have been highlighted in this study, it is evident that several factors are most important for a food truck business to remain sustainable and profitable. It was established that both internal and external factors play an important role in the success of a food truck business. The main external factors identified include industry awareness, marketing and regulations. The internal factors are skills required to run a successful food truck business, having a business strategy, and the importance of financial resources. The findings are aligned with a number of previous studies that have been conducted on food truck businesses in the past. A framework that highlights the factors influencing a food truck business in NMB has been created for ease of use by new entrepreneurs in the food truck industry or current owners who might seek guidance on how to get their business on track. The framework can also be used by metro officials and local government to determine where support might be needed to promote and support entrepreneurs in their business ventures by reviewing policies and regulations. Improved regulations could help food truck owners to grow their businesses and employ more people as well as upskill others.

Keywords: Food truck, business sustainability, entrepreneurship

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

- Dr Frank Makoza for being such a supportive supervisor and for his guidance and insights throughout this journey.
- Professor Chux Gervase Iwu for the support and guidance.
- Grant Foong for all his knowledge and experience that he shared with me regarding the food truck industry.
- All the participants who took the time to meet with me and allowed me into their worlds of food trucking. It has been an extremely joyful and interesting learning experience.
- My workplace, which afforded me the opportunity to study and develop myself.
- My family, whom I love dearly and appreciate very much.
- My Heavenly Father, for His daily grace and strength.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COA	Certificate of Acceptance
COC	Certificate of Compliance
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CTFTA	The Cape Town Food Truck Association
DCT	Dynamic capability theory
MBDA	Mandela Bay Development Agency
NMB	Nelson Mandela Bay
PE	Port Elizabeth
RBV	Resource-based view
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SMME	Small, micro and medium enterprises
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Food truck businesses in the twenty-first century have proven to be a fast-growing industry that allows creative chefs with an entrepreneurial flair to succeed and grow their food ventures (Kukic, 2013:21). Erb (2014:54) suggests that the popularity of food trucks in the USA is due to many gourmet chefs who would have liked to open their own restaurants, but could not afford the risks and cost of a “brick-and-mortar” restaurant. Esparza, Walker and Rossman (2014:148) found that the start of the gourmet food truck industry in the USA can be traced back to 2008 when the economy weakened and consumers cut back on dining out, which led to unemployment for many chefs. Realising the opportunities, the gourmet food truck model idea was born due to entrepreneurial chefs who redesigned the use of basic food trucks and created exciting cuisine. Cantino, Culasso and Racca (2018: 366) identified two types of food trucks currently in the industry, namely a traditional food truck and a gourmet food truck. Traditional food trucks are identified as trucks that mostly operate within commercial areas, selling food that is characterised as cheap, fast street foods like hot dogs. Gourmet food trucks, also referred to as upmarket food trucks or food trailers, have emerged over the past seven years and have a new philosophy of good quality food with specifically selected ingredients, aesthetic presentation and traditional recipes with new flair (Cantino et al., 2018: 366).

Food trucks are a major part of the food and beverage sector and more specifically to the fast food industry (SME South Africa, 2021: 1). According to Roberts (2017: 35), Cape Town was the first city in South Africa to start the trend of upmarket food trucks in 2012, by Chef Luca Castiglione. Castiglione who owns the popular restaurant Limoncello, highlights the convenience of a food truck being able to go to the people and being in a different location each day. The idea of starting a food truck business was sparked by Castiglione when catering was required at a film set in Cape Town and his restaurant was approached to deliver the food. Castiglione and two family members went on a search to find the perfect food truck and started off initially by parking once a week outside Camps Bay on a sunny day (Mail & Guardian, 2012: 1). Roberts (2017: 35) claims that there will always be a place for the boerewors roll and potato snack stands in South Africa but found that the gourmet food trucks bring new life to ordinary street food (Mahlangu, 2019). Mahlo (2016: 1) reported in an eNCA article the opportunity for the food truck entrepreneurs in South Africa as being such a diverse country with so many cultural dietary requirements such as Kosher or Halaal food. Food trucks offer high-quality, fresh, meals that demand attention to detail and seem to attract many food lovers. Mahlangu (2019:

40) found that in Gauteng, the majority of food truck entrepreneurs started their businesses in the need to pursue independence, the desire to be self-employed, or simply to follow a passion.

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in Nelson Mandela Bay by examining the perceptions of the entrepreneurs on the elements that they believe have an influence on their business.

1.2 Background to the study

The food truck industry around the world has increased in popularity over the years. In the United States of America, food trucks have managed to influence the social, cultural and economic prospects for both vendors and food enthusiasts (Thomas, 2016: 30; Cardoso, Companion & Marras, 2014: 23). Many restaurants in North America, Australia and Europe, have expanded their businesses to the food truck sector as an alternative pop-up restaurant (Henderson, 2017: 791). Meanwhile, entrepreneurs and chefs in a number of emerging countries, have started food truck businesses mainly due to the benefit of the low capital required (Cardoso et al., 2014: 125). Kowalczyk and Kubal-Czerwińska (2020: 309) found that many African cities are familiar with street vendors that have nowadays improved services by using portable food carts such as motorbikes, modified bicycles and cars.

Food trucks are defined as large vehicles that are equipped for the preparation and selling of food (Petersen, 2014: 132). Erb (2014: 31) describes a food truck as a vehicle with a full-service kitchen where “food is cooked, prepared, and serviced for individual portion service”. The Cape Town Food Truck Association (2021) notes the value that mobile food-based businesses can add to real estate development, the creation of new life and energy in city spaces and the support to developing projects within a city. Mahlangu (2019: 24) highlights the importance of SMEs to the economy, in particular the ability to create jobs. Food trucks meet the criteria that define the definition of SMEs in South Africa (Mahlangu, 2019: 26). Eldridge (2015: 26) found that food trucks have the ability to uplift areas in economic distress by providing fast, local and healthy food. Food trucks in South Africa have become significantly popular over the past few years. Cape Town is the leading city in the food truck industry, followed by Johannesburg and Durban (Roberts, 2017:1).

This study seeks to investigate the factors that food truck entrepreneurs believe influence the sustainability of their businesses in Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB). The researcher is unaware of any previous studies conducted on this topic in NMB. DiPietro (2016: 1225) suggests more in-depth research to support the restaurant and food service industry with practical steps and new ideas on how to improve their business. Truong (2019: 6) found that previous studies conducted within the food and beverage sector on the success and failure of businesses are mostly based on restaurants

specifically and none focus on the food truck sector. Several studies have produced research on the challenges of the food truck industry (Ideris, Zainum, Mustafa, Nordin, and Zainol, 2017; Strand, 2015; Erb, 2014; Hawk, 2013), but there is still insufficient data on the factors that influence food truck entrepreneurs in South Africa and particularly in Nelson Mandela Bay.

1.3 Problem statement

Food trucks in South Africa only became a rising trend towards the latter part of 2013 as food entrepreneurs believed it to be a practical solution to meeting the demand for high-quality, inexpensive fast food (Govender-Ypma, 2014:1). The focus of this thesis is to determine the factors that NMB entrepreneurs believe influence the sustainability of their food truck businesses. There is limited research known to the researcher that has investigated these factors, and the majority of available research on food trucks seems to be based in the United States of America. Truong (2019: 67) also found that there is restricted research available on the food truck industry and the majority of the online studies, books and articles are from American authors, based on American cities. Mahlangu (2019: 24) claims that the lack of academic material available on food trucks in South Africa is due to its being a relatively new phenomenon in the country.

The biggest challenge for food truck entrepreneurs, according to Ideris et al. (2017: 89), is to constantly attract customers and the battle to ensure the sustainability of the business. Ishak, Nordin, Ghazali, Abidin, Ungku and Bakar (2018: 118) found that food truck owners in Malaysia are constantly confronted with new regulations, mainly due to economic concerns of the various municipalities within the country and pressure from restaurateurs. Business environment barriers force food truck entrepreneurs to remain inventive in their marketing attempts in order to ensure sustainability. Isak et al. (2018: 118) found that one of the most successful strategies for the sustainability of a food truck business is the use of social media.

Despite the increasing popularity of the food truck industry in NMB, there is no way of accurately evaluating the factors which influence the sustainability of a food truck business in the metro. Entrepreneurs are unable to predict the long-term success of their endeavours, due to the lack of studies on the sustainability of food truck businesses. The study attempts to resolve the problem statement: “No measurable approach exists to evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB” by qualitatively examining the views of entrepreneurs. The term “sustainability” in the context of this study refers to the responsible and effective use of resources so that a business can economically operate to produce an operational profit (Circular Ecology, 2021).

1.4 Research objectives

Society, local government and food truck entrepreneurs should understand the benefits derived from; cultivating the food truck industry for regional economic development. This research study attempts to resolve the problem statement, “No measurable approach exists to evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB” and therefore formulates the research objectives as:

Primary objective

To evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB.

Secondary objectives

In order to achieve the main research objective, the following secondary objectives were formulated.

- Identify the motivations for starting a food truck business;
- Establish future plans of food truck entrepreneurs in NMB to ensure a sustainable business;
- Determine the challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs in NMB;
- Investigate the policies and governance needed to create an enabling environment that supports food truck entrepreneurs in NMB.

1.5 Research questions

In order to achieve the research objectives, the following research questions need to be addressed.

Primary research question

What are the perceptions of NMB food truck entrepreneurs on the factors influencing the sustainability of their businesses?

Secondary research questions

In order to achieve the main research question, the following secondary questions were raised.

- What are the motivations for starting a food truck business in NMB?
- What are the future plans of NMB food truck entrepreneurs towards building a sustainable business?
- What are the challenges facing food truck entrepreneurs in NMB?
- How do the regulations in NMB assist food truck entrepreneurs to create an enabling environment that supports their business?

1.6 Rationale of the study

There is currently no measurable approach to evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB. This research aims to investigate these factors and to share the findings with street food enthusiasts and entrepreneurs in the food truck industry. Are food trucks here to stay and will entrepreneurs be sure of a successful business venture when starting a food truck business in NMB? The factors to be explored in this study include awareness of the business, a business strategy, entrepreneurial and operational skills, the regulations to operate the business, and marketing and financial resources (Truong, 2019: 63).

It is also believed that the food industry at large could benefit from the findings of this research, as the aim is also to provide a better understanding of the contribution that the food truck industry makes to NMB and its economy. The metro and city officials in charge of the issuing of hawkers' licences, health inspections and general management of festivals and events in NMB will also benefit from the findings of this research. New food truck entrepreneurs wishing to enter the food truck industry can also base their planning and business opportunities from the research conducted in this study. Metro officials could also learn from the study on how to support these entrepreneurs and assist in the growth and sustainability of these businesses for the entrepreneurs to employ more people and upskill others (Bvuma & Marnewick, 2020: 12). The theoretical rationale for the study is to provide an in-depth understanding of the food truck industry phenomenon in NMB and to generate new knowledge and insights from the study.

1.7 Theory informing the study

The theoretical underpinning of this study was based on existing research conducted on food trucks and the food and beverage industry at large. Truong (2019: 27) conducted research by seeking the differences and similarities between case studies of food truck businesses in Finland, Europe. The research focus was to determine the key factors food truck businesses need to adhere to in order to succeed and prevent failure (Truong, 2019: 26). The findings by Truong (2019: 62) showcased the importance of a business strategy that is deemed crucial to the survival of a food truck business. Human resources pertaining to skills and industry knowledge as well as the regulations and licence requirements for food truck businesses to operate were also reported by Truong (2019: 62). Lastly, financing and ensuring a capital fund with strict budgeting is another factor that ensures a successful business, although Truong (2019: 63) argues that good operational planning can compensate for the lack of finances.

The research done by Mahlangu (2019: 8) involves the motives for the use of social media platforms by food truck owners in Gauteng, South Africa. That study explored the relationships between social media and food truck entrepreneurs by means of a case study. Mahlangu (2019: 44) found two main reasons for the use of social media by food truck businesses: the low cost involved in using the platforms and the popularity of social media. The other focus of the research conducted by Mahlangu (2019: 83), further explored in this study, was the motivation for starting a food truck business. The two main motives found by Mahlangu (2019: 83) were a passion for the food industry and the desire for independence.

DiPietro (2016: 1224) identified a gap in the research, based on a study conducted on the food service industry and the key trends that have been researched for over a decade. The gap was a lack of research conducted on food trucks and the operation of the mobile trucks as well as customer perceptions (DiPietro, 2016: 1224). That being said, the study showcased trends that are associated with the food industry and highlighted key themes that included service quality, finances, operations, marketing, innovation and health and safety.

Furthermore, Tirpak (2018: 257) conducted a critical urban study by observing and interviewing local residents on their perceptions of the possible future of food truck vending in their city. The study compared basic street food vending practices with those of the more recent gourmet food truck movement in a city in San Antonio, Texas. Tirpak's (2018: 267) findings highlight the perceived preference by the local government for food trucks operating in the city as opposed to historical street vending from stalls, stands and trollies. It is argued that the practices of traditional street food vending are being seized by the local government in an attempt to "clean up" the city and revamp some parts as more affluent areas. The traditional food entrepreneurs are being challenged, as food trucks are moving into the city and receiving more attention and support from the local government in an attempt to promote healthier and safer food trading (Tirpak, 2018: 267).

Based on previous research conducted on food trucks, in the context of this study, the external factors of industry regulations, awareness and marketing were investigated. The internal factors such as entrepreneurial skills, business strategies and financial resources were also explored.

1.8 Summary of research methodology

Paradigms guide a researcher's study and research methodology. According to Howitt and Cramer (2020: 460), the interpretive approach adopts a philosophy of trying to understand human behaviour and gain an in-depth understanding. The researcher therefore also becomes the primary research

instrument. A positivistic approach, on the other hand, leads to the discoveries and explanations of casual relationships between variables in an effort to predict nature, human and animal behaviour by generalising results (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 24). The key focus of critical realism is to uncover myths, invest in people and transform society for a better world by accepting reality (Howitt & Cramer, 2020: 370). The interpretive paradigm is therefore most suitable for this study because it seeks to understand the perception of food truck entrepreneurs regarding the factors influencing the sustainability of their business.

The research approach can be either qualitative or quantitative and is determined by the intention of the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009: 73). This research study attempts to understand the perceptions of food truck owners on the factors affecting the sustainability of the food truck businesses in NMB. In light of this, the utilisation of a qualitative analysis is fitting. Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:174) explain that the goal of qualitative research is to explore, understand, and describe the findings. Some of the techniques used in qualitative research include field research, focus groups, case studies and interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 333). Semi-structured interviews, with several open-ended questions, were used as data collection tool in this study. Howitt and Cramer (2020: 388) explain that the aim of interviewing participants is to learn more about their specific opinions, views and beliefs regarding a specific occurrence. It is therefore clear why interviews are an advantage for this study. The purpose of the study is to gain rich insights from the food truck owners on factors influencing their business.

Rashid, Rashid, Warraich, Sabir and Waseem (2019: 5) define case study research as “a detailed investigation, often with empirical material collected over a period of time from a well-defined case to provide an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon”. Yin (1994: 286), a seminal source of case studies, further explains that case studies are usually preferred due to the researcher having “little control over events” and when the focus of the study includes the phenomenon of real-life context. According to Rashid et al. (2019: 5), case study research describes “real-life [phenomena]” and provides the possibility of identifying essential factors, relationships and processes. Case study research also supports multiple data collection methods and the researcher would be able to include interviews and the review of documents to strengthen data and arguments (Rashid et al., 2019: 8). It is therefore an appropriate design to use in this research.

An inductive approach were used for this research study, as a sample of participants from the food truck industry were selected to take part in semi-structured interviews. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018: 41), inductive theorising is when a researcher moves from particular to more general themes and applies the data to wider theoretical concepts. It is therefore mostly stated as a “bottom-

up approach”, as “inductive theorising allows the building of an existing or a new theory” (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 49). Creswell and Creswell (2018: 262) explain that a semi-structured interview has the perfect balance between a broad investigation and a descriptive approach. Semi-structured interview techniques are usually used to collect detail about current activities, seek new insights, pinpoint patterns and to recognise relationships amongst variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018: 262).

Only entrepreneurs in NMB who have a food truck or food trailer that is defined as a vehicle-mounted, readily movable restaurant formed part of this study. Pushcarts, food stands or food stalls were not considered in this research. The researcher has identified that the sampling frame, food truck owners in NMB, comprises similar characteristics in terms of the objective of the business. The popularity of food trucks in NMB has grown significantly since the first official Food Truck event, which was held on 18 November 2016. According to the Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism website (Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism, 2021), the first event started with a dozen food trucks and increased to 23 trucks by 10 February 2017.

The purposive sampling method was employed in this study. The choice of sampling method is based on the objective of this research study. According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:142), purposive sampling is when specific qualities are chosen by the researcher and added to the sample, based on specific characteristics. The researcher needs to study the population in the light of the research question and then determine the specific characteristics needed within the population that are needed for the research. The sample is then selected from the population based on the specific characteristics only (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:143). The purposive sampling method worked well in this study as only food truck entrepreneurs in NMB formed part of the sample. Convenience sampling was also used to select entrepreneurs based on their ease of access to the researcher (Howitt & Cramer, 2020: 68).

Finally, the snowballing technique was also considered for this study. Howitt and Cramer (2020: 269) explain the snowball sampling as a technique used for referrals from a participant to other participants with the same characteristics that also fit the population being studied. The researcher implemented the theoretical saturation point when it was deemed that any further data collection would be unnecessary. Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs and Jinks (2017: 1899) suggest that a researcher could reach the point of saturation once they do not hear any new information during the interviews being conducted. The decision of saturation is therefore called before the coding process starts (Saunders et al., 2018: 1899).

Qualitative research typically concentrates on a small sample size, selected specifically for investigation and thorough understanding of a specific occurrence (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:173).

The researcher for this study interviewed food truck entrepreneurs from NMB by employing open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview. There seem to be no official numbers published of food trucks operating within NMB, but the estimated number of trucks was less than forty, according to sources that were operating within the industry at the time of the study. The population as such was very small and the study drew data from a limited number of food trucks.

The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants on a smartphone. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 263) describe interviewing as a “systematic collection of data” by asking a set of planned questions, cautiously listening and then recording the responses from the participants. The development of an interview guide for the semi-structured interviews was sourced from the literature studied and that was linked to the objectives of this research. A pilot interview was conducted with one food truck entrepreneur before the rest of the entrepreneurs were contacted for a scheduled date and time to be interviewed. The aim of the pilot was to help improve the reliability of the schedule and assist to amend certain questions if necessary.

According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:173) a researcher is able to obtain “depth of data, gathered from complex and multi-faceted phenomena in a specific social context” by using qualitative data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews were the method used in this research study. The interviews were conducted by the researcher by contacting food truck entrepreneurs in NMB and scheduling a convenient time and place with them for the interview. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 263) suggest that the researcher should first make contact with the informants to introduce themselves and briefly explain the reason for the interview request. During the interview, it is important to build trust and ensure that both the researcher and the informant are relaxed and comfortable. The interviewer should allow questions to flow naturally and provide explanations if needed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 263).

Thematic analysis was used in this study by implementing Braun and Clarke’s (2006: 77) 6-step framework. According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 77), thematic analysis is an advantage for qualitative studies due to its being a “method rather than a methodology” and is therefore deemed not to be tied to a specific theoretical perspective. Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3354) explain that Braun and Clarke’s 6-step framework is very useful to conduct thematic analysis as the researcher can move forward and backwards between the data and does not have to operate in a linear fashion. The six steps include the following: “1. become familiar with the data, 2. Generate initial codes, 3. Search for themes, 4. Review themes, 5. Define themes and 6. Write up” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3354). Open coding was used to populate the initial data. This method is more user-friendly and not as time-consuming as line-by-line coding which requires every single line to be coded (Maguire & Delahunt,

2017: 3355). The researcher also considered using Qualitative Data Analysis software to support the data analysis process.

1.9 Delimitation

This study is limited to food truck entrepreneurs operating in Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa. As noted above, Nelson Mandela Bay is “located on the shores of Algoa Bay in the Eastern Cape Province and comprises the city of Port Elizabeth, the nearby towns of Uitenhage and Despatch, and the surrounding rural area” (Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism, 2021).

Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014: 275) describe limitations of research as constraints that are “out of your control, such as time, financial resources, access to information, and so on”. The sample size of this study is small and limited to the food truck businesses in NMB only. The use of face-to-face interviews as the data collection method could lead to interviewer bias, as the researcher could interpret answers to suit an anticipated outcome of the study and not necessarily what the participant meant. The overall limited research conducted on food truck entrepreneurs in South Africa is also a limitation of this study due to the lack of academic literature available on the topic.

1.10 Consideration of research ethics

The researcher applied for approval from the Faculty of Business Ethics Committee of Cape Peninsula University of Technology before the fieldwork and research of this study commenced (see Appendix A & B). Howitt and Cramer (2020: 167) explain that participants in a research study must be formally informed and be made aware that they are taking part in a study. The participants have to give their consent. The participants must be aware of what will be expected of them, how the results of the study will be used and how their identity will be protected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 153). The researcher of this study sought informed consent from all the participants before they were interviewed (see Appendix C). Creswell and Creswell (2018: 153) remind researchers of the importance of privacy and confidentiality. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014: 266) define the word privacy as anonymity. The researcher therefore never recorded the names of the participants in the findings of the study. Confidentiality is maintained when the researcher assures the participants that the information they provide will remain known to the researcher only, even though the responses they provide could match the identity of the participant (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 266). In this study, the researcher numbered each participant and kept a confidential list of their identities.

1.11 Definition of terms

Food Trucks: A large automobile that is easily moveable and equipped with kitchen appliances in order to prepare and sell food (Petersen, 2014: 132). Erb (2014: 31) describes a food truck as a vehicle with a full-service kitchen where “food is cooked, prepared, and serviced for individual portion service”.

Entrepreneur: According to the online Cambridge Dictionary, an entrepreneur is “a person who attempts to make a profit by starting a company or by operating alone in the business world, especially when it involves taking risks” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).

Business sustainability: The term refers to economic sustainability specifically and therefore entails the use of all business resources in a responsible and affective manner in order to continue to operate long term and produce an operational profit (Circular Ecology, 2021).

1.12 Outline of the chapters

Chapter one of the study outlines the background of the research. It provides a brief overview of the research problem and research questions. A brief introduction to previous literature conducted in the field of study is presented, together with a basic theoretical framework. An explanation of the research design and methodology are also provided in this chapter.

Chapter two is a detailed literature review. Many international studies have been conducted around the food truck industry, mainly in the USA. The chapter outlines the background of the food truck industry in general, the benefits of the food truck industry for and impact on a city, and the role of government in the industry.

Chapter three explains the theoretical perspective of this study. It also reviews challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs around the world, as outlined in the literature reviewed.

Chapter four is a discussion of the research design and methodology adopted for the study. The research follows an inductive approach with a qualitative analysis by means of semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

Chapter five is the analysis and discussion of the results of the findings of the study. A thematic analysis was implemented with the help of the six-step framework designed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to sort and code the data.

Chapter six provides the summary and conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The primary research question of this study is to determine the factors that influence the sustainability of food truck businesses in NMB as perceived by food truck entrepreneurs in the metro. In support of the research question and objectives of this study, the following section is a review of literature and research conducted in previous related studies. A summary of the history and background of the food truck industry will be discussed, followed by the impact and role of government and policies on the industry. A discussion of the benefits of food trucks and their impact on a city is also included in this review. The concepts that are described in this section may also define some of the motivating factors for entrepreneurs starting a food truck business.

2.2 The background and history of food trucks

Legend has it that the food truck idea was started circa 1866 in the United States of America by a farmer named Charles Goodnight who served food from a vehicle referred to as a 'chuck wagon' to travellers in Texas (Hawk, 2013: 11). In some American cities, there is evidence of lunch wagons from 1872, and it is believed that Walter Scott started the trend by transporting meals to customers on a wagon pulled by horses. The wagon has the closest resemblance to the modern-day food truck as it had openings on each side to serve the customers, and it had space to store kitchen supplies and utensils (Hawk, 2013: 13). Strand (2015: 11) agrees that the food truck industry was born in America during the 1870s and grew in popularity due to the ease of transporting meals to customers. Food trucks evolved in 1920, and it was documented that Harry Burt introduced the very first ice cream truck in America (Hawk, 2013: 14). McGinnis (2012: 12) claims that since the early 1960s, many city folks in the US enjoyed food vendors selling popular comfort food like tacos, hot dogs and ice cream from a mobile truck.

Hawk (2013: 16) found that the food truck industry grew in the USA as more immigrants moved to big cities like Los Angeles and New York. The immigrants found food truck businesses to be very feasible and economically stable (Strand, 2015: 13). In 2009, a gourmet chef named Roy Choi took the food truck concept further by introducing more eclectic food items, other than the standard tacos and other fast foods (Hawk 2013: 17). Hawk (2013: 18) believes that this was the turning point for the traditional food truck as the recession forced established restaurant owners to turn to other options due to customers not being able to afford expensive dining practices. Strand (2015: 18) found that the gourmet food trucks introduced new life to traditional street food as the trucks created a sense of community building, fun, and served good food. The food trucks offered a feasible alternative and

suddenly more and more trucks appeared around cities like Los Angeles, offering quality cuisine (Hawk, 2013: 18).

According to Esparza, Walker and Rossman (2013: 4), Los Angeles is the largest modern-day food truck market in America. Petersen (2014: 15) reported that taco trucks were very popular in the 1970s in Los Angeles specifically. Esparza et al. (2013: 5) found that the food truck industry had a major boost in early 2008 and has grown significantly each year. It was also found that many traditional lunch trucks that were used to sell meals to construction workers were sold due to the recession in 2008. Unemployed chefs then purchased these food trucks and started offering fast, mobile and newly created food in urban areas (Esparze et al., 2013: 4). Petersen (2014: 16) also reported that the recession of 2008 was the turning point for chefs who no longer had profitable restaurants and had to seek alternative ways of staying in the industry. Petersen (2014: 16), found that the combination of fast, easy gourmet meals being advertised via social media, on offer in different locations around the city, was a very popular alternative to customers who could no longer afford expensive dining out evenings. Interestingly enough, cooking on food trucks was only allowed from 2012 onwards in places like Chicago in the USA. According to Ehrenfeacht (2017: 273), this change increased the popularity of the trucks and created more jobs.

2.3 Food trucks around the world and the South African context

In South Africa, The Cape Town Food Truck Association (CTFTA) was launched in 2013 with the idea of starting a travel food experience with food trucks in and around Cape Town (CTFTA, 2021: 1). In Johannesburg the first food truck park event was launched in September 2016, organised by a company known as the Good and Proper Food Truck Eatery (2016: 1). It is therefore clear that the trend of food trucks in South Africa only started less than 10 years ago; Govender-Ypma (2014: 1) describes it as an industry with “slow but gradual growth”.

There is limited research available on food trucks in Africa however, African countries have benefited from this entrepreneurial practice for many years in the form of street food vendors. Kowalczyk and Kubal-Czerwińska (2020: 309) found that many African cities are familiar with street vendors that have nowadays improved services by using portable food carts such as motorbikes, modified bicycles and cars. In Mozambique cars are modified to operate as food trucks and offer readymade meals to consumers (Kowalczyk & Kubal-Czerwińska, 2020: 309). In Kenya it is reported that stakeholders of the food industry have started creating more modern mobile kitchens in 2018 in order to reach a wider customer base. Nairobi has reportedly experienced an increase in mobile food vendors over the past 4 years (Kuzabiashara, 2021: 1). In Ghana street food vending plays a significant role in self-employment and the importance of earning a living. Street food entrepreneurs enjoy the benefit of

having small start-up costs, easy set-up and no formal education requirements (Addo-Tham, Appiah-Brempong, Vampere, Acquah-Gyan & Akwasi, 2020: 5). Ghartey (2019: 194) found that majority of food vendors in Ghana still however prefer fixed locations as oppose to being mobile. The street food vendors tend to gather in specific areas and create a unique benefit to the consumer for a larger verity of food options.

Thomas (2016: 55) claims that food trucks have a long history in Auckland, New Zealand. The city has seen steady growth in the sector and believes that food trucks have great potential as a tourist attraction. Thomas (2016: 56) reiterates the importance of food truck businesses promoting culinary traditions, and the high quality and nutritional value of their food on offer. The concept of a food truck evolved from the pie cart tradition in New Zealand, carts that used to come in the form of a caravan with a hinge on the side that dispensed fast food. The pie carts made an appearance during the Depression in the 1930s selling economical food to people with low incomes. (Thomas, 2016: 21).

The history of food trucks in Australia is not clear. Puvanenthiran (2013: 1) explains that the culture of street food in Australia has mostly been absent, except for the local sweet stand at shows and the odd baking competitions at the agricultural events. The most popular trend of street food according to Puvanenthiran (2013: 1) was American doughnuts which have been around since the 1950s. Kebab vans started to make an appearance in the early 90s with the increase of migrants from Greece and Turkey. Taco trucks followed shortly after with a gourmet flair introduced by Raph Rashid and his wife who were inspired by the food truck culture in the USA (Puvanenthiran, 2013: 1). By and large, Puvanenthiran (2013: 1) believes that not that much has changed for the food truck industry in Australia as the main aim of the trucks was and still is to offer warm, fatty, comfort food to diners.

Soonthornsaratool (2017: 145) reports that Thailand has a familiar and long history of ice cream trucks, and mobile vehicles selling fried meatballs and sausages. Soonthornsaratool (2017: 145) claims that Thai food truck owners have been driving their trucks around the villages for many years and are different to food truckers in most foreign countries who park their trucks in one spot.

Asmoro, Nurlaily and Aini (2019: 2188) report that Indonesia has seen significant popularity in the food truck movement since 2014. The growth of the industry is believed to be due to the low start-up cost, the preparing of affordable food on a movable vehicle and the impact of social media that assists customers to locate the trucks (Asmoro et al., 2019: 2188).

Alfiero, Giudice and Bonadonna (2017: 2462) report that the influence of the food truck phenomenon in America has strengthened the industry in Italy since 2010. The success of food truck businesses in

the country is due to the cheap, fast, gourmet-style food available on the streets (Alfiero et al., 2017: 2462).

2.4 The role of government in the food truck industry

It is well known that the South African government is at least nominally invested in attempting to grow the economy, increase job creation and reduce poverty in the country. As part of this attempt, the government has identified small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) to assist with the creation of employment in the country (Worku, 2013: 70). It is a global trend for governments of leading economies to support the growth and sustainability of SMMEs. In South Africa, the government supports the growth and expansion of local entrepreneurs so that they can in turn support local suppliers, technology and labour (Worku, 2013: 69). The local governments have recognised and acknowledged the role that SMMEs play in providing jobs, developing skills, transferring technology and supporting the economy. Sadly however, Worku (2013: 69) states that the “SMME sector in South Africa is similar to the SMME sectors in other Sub-Saharan African countries, and is exposed to high failure rate, lack of entrepreneurial skills, lack of resources, lack of access to finance and lack of modern technology”.

The feeling amongst entrepreneurs is that there remains a lack of focused support from the national government of South Africa to the SMME sector and this hinders the possibility of growth within the economy (Worku, 2013: 79). Kumar, Antony, Madu, Montgomery and Park (2008: 879) found that sustainable growth of the SMME sector in a country results in a sustainable economy. It is therefore important for the national government to do more in supporting SMMEs in South Africa in order to develop sustainability amongst entrepreneurs and their ventures. The South African government can take a page out of economic policies in other countries that work.

Interestingly, Loomis (2013: 30) found that in the United States of America, policies within some states are implemented specifically to seek solutions to problems like unemployment, economic crises and urban life decline. The policies are therefore required to hopefully produce specific outcomes to the economic, social and cultural environment of a city. As an example, Loomis (2013: 30) claims that the food truck industry in Florida is governed by policies that assist the “urban economic development” of the state, and due to the fast implementation of these regulations, the results are positive and supportive of both food truck entrepreneurs and local government.

Botha (2012:3) reports that in the City of Cape Town, food truck entrepreneurs have requested the municipality to issue permits and specific trading zones in support of the business ventures. According to Botha (2012:3), the Cape Town City Council has recognised the value that food trucks add to the

economy and tourism. However, Steyn (2020: 1) found that the City of Cape Town has since drafted a strict policy governing food truck businesses in the city that often restricts trading.

The city of Boston in the US has categorised mobile food vendors into four sub-categories, namely Food Push Carts, Mobile Food Trucks, Ice Cream Trucks, and Canteen Trucks (Erb, 2014: 31). The regulations and policies differ depending on the sub-category of the food vendor; for example, a pushcart has no running water for washing hands, and ice cream trucks have no cooking facilities and only serve frozen desserts (Erb, 2014: 31). Different regulations therefore apply to a food truck that serves cooked meals and has a fitted kitchen. Food trucks in particular are regulated by officials to ensure clean equipment and sanitised work services (Erb, 2014: 42). All mobile food vendors in Boston must apply to the municipal government for a yearly permit in order to operate.

Tirpak (2018: 35) found that in some instances, local governments in Texas implement specific regulations that prohibit daily street vending. Being in the street food business has changed significantly for entrepreneurs, from a self-sustained initiative to a closely monitored business that is struggling to perform and grow due to restricted government regulations (Tirpak, 2018: 64). Erb (2014: 48) argues that the “entrepreneurial spirit at the foundation of food truck businesses has contributed to national and regional governments’ newfound support for trucks”. The United States government has added support and suggestions for entrepreneurs wanting to start their own food truck business on the BusinessUSA website for small businesses. This was not always the case as in the past, many local United States governments labelled food carts and trucks as pesky and persistent (Erb, 2014: 48). Most city governments blame food truck businesses for litter and traffic congestion in the areas where they operate.

Hawk (2013: 25) claims that local government either has the ability to significantly contribute to the success of food truck businesses or be the reason for their total failure. It does however remain the responsibility of the food truck owner to be familiar with the regulations involved in operating a legal business. Many major cities in the United States have strict parking rules for food trucks regarding where they can and cannot park to do business. A few cities that have not experienced the fast growth of food trucks do not have such strict regulations and are therefore able to operate much more easily. The popularity of food trucks has caught the attention of many new customers and the media, which has however placed a spotlight on street vending in general and means increased inspections by authorities (Hawk, 2013: 25). Tirpak (2018: 240) suggests that city councils must review regulations to support the food truck industry and look at ways to incorporate outdoor activities, better use of public space, and ways to support tourism and other small businesses.

Tirpak (2018: 163) found that the regulation of mobile food vending in Texas is restricting the number of entrepreneurs who would like to venture into the food truck industry. Regulations often require food truck vendors to obtain expensive health and safety training and certification in order to operate. In San Antonio, the local government conducts annual health and safety inspections of the food trucks when officials are available. Food trucks also have to adhere to strict water requirements such as having hot water available on the truck for washing hands and cooking utensils. Food truck owners and all their staff are required to have police clearance certificates. The entrepreneurs see this as a major barrier to their business, and extra costs involved for the benefit of the local government (Tirpak, 2018: 169).

Ab Wahab, Halim, Rashid and Adam (2017: 136) suggest that food truck entrepreneurs in Malaysia are confronted by many obstacles to operating as legal food trucks. Licensing issues, hygiene standards and good quality food are some of the struggles that entrepreneurs have to overcome on a regular basis. The government does support new food truck businesses by providing a portion of the start-up capital, and earmarking locations that are worthwhile for the owners. Ab Wahab, et al, (2017: 136) states that food truck businesses in Malaysia are bound to grow, although it will not be possible without continuous support from the government.

In the USA many local governments support the growth of the food truck industry, by reviewing the regulations and encouraging entrepreneurship. Problematic areas do however still exist, especially for the immigrants to the country who are operating from the old traditional food trucks that have not been developed and upgraded to the standards of the more recent gourmet trucks (Tirpak, 2018: 267). Loomis (2013: 29) found that when the government is able to find “quick solutions to diverse problems” then regulations are eagerly adhered to and followed by business owners, especially when they can see the benefits and successful results within their business.

In California, for example, there are strict regulations regarding food truck businesses that are not allowed to use generators in order to reduce noise pollution. This rule by local governments is supported by communities and fellow food truck owners as the noise of a number of food trucks together at a food park will be overbearing and annoying (Hawk, 2013: 55).

Erb (2014: 102) suggests that local governments should develop a strategy to subsidise food trucks for operating in communities where healthy food is too expensive or not always available. In Boston, food trucks have won the favour of the local government due to their ability to change dead space into social hubs (Erb, 2014: 47). The Boston City Council encourages mobile food units in the city as they have realised the employment opportunities and the economic development generated from this industry (Ross & LaMattina, 2013:1). In the urban areas of New York and Los Angeles, food truck

businesses became an economically viable endeavour for immigrants arriving in the USA. The US government for example has added resources on their BusinessUSA website to encourage and support mobile food entrepreneurs to scale up their businesses. Erb (2014:48) comments that small-scale entrepreneurs are highly valued in American culture. However, in Texas, Tirpak (2018: 14) found the local government has often piloted food parks in particular for food trucks, in an attempt to garner more support and growth of the local entrepreneurs, but these do not seem to have been very successful. Concerns have been raised by the business owners that local government decides on the location of these parks and the dates and times, but does not consult with the vendors. The food parks end up failing as there has been little interest by the consumers. The San Antonio government's idea seems to be based on prior research conducted wherein local city councils have managed to transform certain public spaces into vibrant and fun attractions. San Antonio Texas seem to have similar conditions to South Africa, where downtown areas are less desirable for trading due to homelessness and poverty. The role of the government in the transformation of the downtown areas by introducing food parks and attracting consumers does not seem to be successful.

Tirpak (2018: 151) points out that there are distinct differences between the public spaces in underused urban spaces vs public spaces in the suburban areas and that government should not force food parks into less desirable areas as it does not support the food truck industry and entrepreneurs in a meaningful way.

2.5 Benefits

Petersen (2014: 30) states that food truck businesses have the ability to create many benefits within a city due to their positive social and informal nature. Food trucks are able to create economic, social and cultural benefits within a community and city. Kukic (2013: 52) agrees that food truck businesses contribute important cultural, social, and economical benefits to the success of a city. It is therefore important for municipal regulations to reflect and support food truck businesses in order to not restrict the cultural purpose of street vending in society (Kukic, 2013: 52). The gathering of food trucks attracts consumer traffic and encourages the use of public areas, which leads to a vibrant street and public life (Beresky, 2011:33; Stainsby, 2011:1), and thus supports Kukic's (2013:50) view on the cultural and social impact of this industry. Strand (2015:17) asserts that gourmet food trucks attract many people due to the ever-changing menus and colourful décor of the trucks. Another positive aspect of a food truck business is the fairly low start-up cost in comparison to brick-and-mortar restaurants, which allow skilled chefs to become entrepreneurs and start their own businesses (Lederman, 2011:1).

In March 2018, the Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA) in NMB introduced a new initiative to the city centre of Port Elizabeth with the aim of increasing vibrancy and interest in the CBD. The event was a partnership between the Baakens Food Truck Company and the Eastern Cape Philharmonic Orchestra to bring unique sounds and tastes to the city centre. The event was a great success and the MBDA reported good attendance on both Saturday and Sunday with positive feedback from the food truck owners, crafters and patrons (Creative Feel Magazine, March 2018, 1). Foong (2018) explains that these events have a positive impact on the food truck industry in NMB, as they provide small businesses and individuals a platform to display their food talents to the broader public. Associations like the Baakens Food Truckers in NMB are formed by a group of talented food enthusiasts who have changed the way that the general public view street food. Foong (2018) believes that customers at food truck events are now guaranteed quality food that is true value for money.

Other benefits in the context of South Africa include the possibility of skills development opportunities for entrepreneurs and addressing unemployment through entrepreneurship. Worku (2013: 14) conducted a study on “factors that affect the long-term survival of small businesses in Pretoria” and it was found that businesses are negatively affected in most cases due to a lack of entrepreneurial skills. Food truck entrepreneurs have the ability to be upskilled and to become chefs or train others to learn the necessary skills. Mahlangu (2019: 101) found that the encouragement of small businesses to create employment for themselves and others is the reason for the increase of food trucks around Gauteng markets.

Several studies thus far have linked the benefits of food trucks in a city and the impact they have on the overall social, cultural and economic environments. The following section is extracted from the literature that has described these benefits and impacts in more detail.

2.5.1 Social benefits

Eldridge (2015: 27) points out the important benefits of food truck businesses in communities. One of the main benefits “is the ability to add social vitality to the streetscape” and the underutilised spaces within a city. Food trucks are able to bring enjoyment and life to dull areas where other corporate businesses are unable to. Petersen (2014: 28) agrees that food trucks can expand social benefits by creating a space for good food and interaction across a range of open places within a city. Petersen (2014: 28) found that there is an attraction and desire from consumers to support local businesses. Food vendors have the ability to meet the need and build a sense of community.

Rishi (2013: 12) argues that policymakers should plan a way to use food trucks to bring people together where revitalisation and a sense of community are needed. Food trucks offer the opportunity for social

interaction that can strengthen the community and create a network for the building of relationships. Portland is a good example of how the food truck industry is supported by authorities to increase social activity and safer surroundings, especially in underutilised urban spaces (Eldridge, 2015: 28).

Festivals play a vital role in the social environment and the interactions among food truck owners. Eldridge (2015: 89) reports that “public street festivals” create the way for food trucks to be used at more private events, business office parks and sports gatherings. These are all important interactions that add to the social benefit of a community (Eldridge, 2015: 89). Mohd-Ramly, Ghapar and Omar (2019: 1087) suggest that food truck entrepreneurs should add entertainment and comfortable eating spots to increase the attraction of the community.

As noted by Erb (2014: 12), food trucks could be the answer to the goal of many American cities that are seeking the renewal of urban spaces for social benefits. Food trucks can develop relationships not only amongst fellow entrepreneurs but also with employees and customers. This creates special social activity that not many other businesses are able to establish. Gathered food trucks have the ability to turn sidewalks, squares and parking lots into vibrant and festive spaces (Erb, 2014: 10). McCracken (2012: 160) argues that gourmet food trucks inject new life into urban spaces that used to be associated with smaller food vendors only. The food trucks create an environment of enjoyment and community building, similar to the chuck wagons from the 1870s (McCracken, 2012: 160).

de Souza Bispo and Almeidab (2020: 106) comment that food has always been a basic need for survival and health. Eating has evolved to reflect an enjoyable social practice participated in by family and friends. Food trucks have added to the togetherness and enjoyment of food, especially when the trucks are parked at food parks or markets (de Souza Bispo & Almeidab, 2020: 106). Erb (2014: 8) has found that food trucks have the ability to ease the tension between urban and suburban areas in the city of Boston in the United States. According to Erb (2014: 10), the gathering of food trucks in one area easily transforms urban social events in a city. Food trucks are able to draw people from their homes and offices into public spaces of the city and create a special ambience and a neighbourly community (Erb, 2014: 10).

Overall, these studies highlight the social benefit that food trucks are able to bring to a community. It can therefore be argued as one of the many reasons why food trucks are able to bring people and communities together and have a positive impact on a city.

2.5.2 Economic benefits

According to SME South Africa (2021: 1), food trucks are listed as part of the broader food and beverage sector in the country. The fast food sector, in particular, is a large contributor to the constant

expansion of the industry and in May 2019 the industry showed a growth of 2.9% from the previous year. Sales in the fast food sector have grown by 7.5% in comparison to 2018 and are a good indicator of why the industry is showing growth (SME South Africa, 2021: 1).

Loomis (2013: 89) categorises street vending in general as an important economic movement. More specifically the gathering of food trucks creates cultural and positive economic interests (Loomis, 2013: 89). Petersen (2014: 28) agrees with this finding and states that food trucks create a positive economic impact on a city.

Petersen (2014: 28) identifies one of the major economic benefits that food trucks can inject into the food industry, namely the ability to offer effective services that permanent businesses are not necessarily able to do. Examples include the involvement of food trucks at irregular events and seasonal festivals that do not necessarily sustain other larger businesses. In addition to “promoting economic activity and meeting consumer needs, food trucks provide options for entrepreneurship and income mobility” (Petersen, 2014: 28). Rishi (2013: 12) argues that if food trucks can draw large crowds of people and other merchants are invited to set up shop in the same area, then it will increase the means of economic revival. Rishi (2013: 38) further highlights that food vending, in general, is able to “act as a means of economic development and stability” for the business owners.

Thomas (2016: 46) highlights a different perspective and considers the motivation for tourists to often visit specific attractions and the important role that all types of food establishments are able to play in support of the potential economic gain of a city. Tourists often have a social and cultural connection with the flavours and tastes of food while travelling. In South Africa, the tourism sector is seen as a huge positive injection to the economy of the country (Government Communication and Information System, 2017: 2) and it is therefore important not to forget the role that food and the hospitality industry at large can play in an economy.

South Africa has many economic challenges, and small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) have been identified as an important factor in improving the economy. Policies that encourage sustainable SMME development are needed (Bvuma & Marnewick, 2020: 12). A food truck business may not necessarily be the road to substantial economic development or financial success, but Eldrige (2015: 119) argues that food trucks are “still subject to greater economic and political forces”. There seems to be an exciting rise in foodie culture amongst South African consumers that could lead to positive growth of the economy within this sector (SME South Africa, 2021: 2). Eldrige (2015: 119) has however found that there is not enough research data available to fully comprehend the short- and long-term effect of food truck businesses on the economy of a city.

2.5.3 Cultural benefits

Food truck consumers claim that they have contributed somewhat to food truck entrepreneurs who are unable to open a restaurant, start a small business, or otherwise be part of a city's overall cultural footprint (Shpigel, 2015: 381). A study conducted in Los Angeles found that food trucks have a definite social impact on urban culture (Rishi, 2013: 10). Street food is a business that is virtually expected to be found in every country, although each culture has different street food specialities. Farmers' markets are a good example of an event that has always managed to bring communities together. The markets allow people to meet and interact with each other, and have managed to create a special culture amongst consumers and business owners alike (Rishi, 2013: 16).

Street food culture in South Africa is very popular and has a long history, especially within the informal settlements of the country (Hill, Mchizab, Puoaneb & Steyn, 2019: 1). Food trucks do not form part of the informal business structure of the country, but have seen steady growth and interest amongst entrepreneurs and consumers over the past few years (Mahlangu, 2019: 13). Some of the key trends that are driving the growth of food truck businesses in South Africa include the long working hours of consumers who do not have time to cook every day and need to source alternative meals. Another factor is the increased consumer awareness and interest in international food flavours that have created the opportunity for innovators to offer authentic foreign dishes to local consumers (SME South Africa, 2021: 2).

Petersen (2014: 28) found that food trucks have the ability to test untapped markets, new concepts and different recipes at a much lower cost than restaurants. By offering new products, flavours and improved recipes, food trucks contribute to the ethos of a city. Further, food trucks that offer specialised cuisine also build diversity within a community (Petersen, 2014: 28).

Eldrige (2015: 117) found that the sense of community amongst food truck entrepreneurs, the shared interests and goals aspired to, are part of the importance of the success of a food truck business. Food truck business owners seem to ensure that everyone is compliant with the regulations and work together to assist with a harmonious environment. The presence of regular food truck businesses attending festivals and events also strengthens the sense of community amongst the entrepreneurs. The festivals often create a specific culture for the city and food trucks are almost always associated with these events (Eldrige, 2015: 117). Kucic (2013: 14) agrees, and states that the cultures of a particular city are often replicated in the variety and quality of its street foods.

Lütke and Lemon (2021: 44) warn against a high rise in food truck menu prices to avoid social exclusivity. Consumers are attracted to cuisine and environments that create a pleasant atmosphere.

Urban areas are transformed by physical and social activity through the culinary experiences that are associated with that area. Good food produced by food trucks is often the driving force behind the positive transformation of neighbourhoods and the development of a foodie culture (Lütke & Lemon, 2021: 45). Thomas (2016: 31) highlights the importance of food “in the overall tourism experience” and the specific role that street food plays therein. Food trucks have become a permanent feature in many cities and are now part of the social and cultural experiences that locals and tourists want to enjoy.

Erb (2014: 11) argues that the presence of food trucks in corporate areas is not very common and that this space can be utilised more in order to facilitate social interaction. Tirpak (2018: 123) agrees and adds that not all cities have a culture of food trucks being parked on every street corner. The urban area of some cities does not necessarily have high foot traffic or a vibrant street life and food truck owners need to adapt their business model to accommodate that culture (Tirpak, 2018: 123).

Erb (2014: 43) reported that the official website of the City of Boston states that gourmet food trucks are growing in popularity due to the upscale tastes of consumers. It states that people between the ages of 18 to 44 are expecting freshly prepared, high-quality restaurant-type food that is served quickly and yet is inexpensive. These findings tie in with what Kukic (2013: 14) reported regarding the cultures of particular cities that are simulated in the variety and quality of street food.

The research conducted by Kukic (2013: 22) is an analysis to better understand the contribution food trucks make to a city’s social, cultural, and economic vitality. Kukic (2013: 28) found that the fast food culture in the United States, coupled with the often under-regulation of street vending has encouraged entrepreneurs to follow their dreams in the American food truck industry. The rise of food truck culture in the twenty-first century has largely created a fast-growing industry that allowed creative chefs with an entrepreneurialism spirit to thrive (Kukic, 2013: 62).

Kukic (2013: 52) reported that in cities like Los Angeles and Portland there seem to be much stronger food truck markets and a vibrant atmosphere due to food trucks not being as restricted as in cities like Vancouver. Menus are also not restricted to specific food items and the food entrepreneurs are encouraged to reflect their city’s culture.

2.6 Summary

Chapter two covered the literature review related to the objectives of this study. A review was conducted on the history of the food truck industry, the role and impact that a government and its policies could have on the industry and the benefits that food trucks can bring to a city.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

A review conducted of previous related studies provides an understanding of the general challenges that entrepreneurs face in the food truck industry. Chapter three highlights these challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs from around the world. A conceptual framework previously indicated in this study determined two basic sets of factors influencing the sustainability of food truck businesses, namely internal and external factors. Reviewing pertinent aspects found in previous research, the key assumption is that both internal and external factors contribute to a sustainable food truck business. The external factors, which include aspects such as government policy and city regulations (McGinnis, 2012: 34), as well as the economy (DiPietro, 2016: 1213), cannot be controlled by the food truck entrepreneur. Internal factors can be controlled by the entrepreneur and include a good business strategy for growth and maturity (Myrick, 2012: 19) as well as good entrepreneurial and operational skills (Truong, 2019: 62). A number of these factors are highlighted and discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Theories informing the study

Many theories can explain the success of a food truck business. Previous studies on small businesses have mainly used the resource-based view (RBV) and dynamic capabilities theory (DCT).

3.2.1 Resource-based view theory

The resource-based view is a traditional theory that has been used for many years to effectively describe the accomplishments of firms that have managed to create competitive advantages and showcase how these companies have sustained those advantages (Sanchez & Heene, 1997). The main objective of RBV, according to the seminal source Barney (1986), has been informing strategies and showcasing competence perspectives of an organisation. Majid, Zahari, Jipiu, Bashir and Kutut (2022: 277) have found that the RBV theory can be used to analyse and evaluate an organisation's internal resources and capabilities when attempting to develop a long-term plan for competitive advantages and then determine the strategic options for the external business environment.

There are however some limitations found by researchers around the RBV theory. Priem and Butler (2001: 23) for example found that change in an organisation's operational environment is completely disregarded by the RBV theory. Barney (2001), cited in Ajitabh and Momaya (2004: 52), identified further limitations with the theory as it seemed to lack areas that include the market positioning, not being customer-focused and more applicable to larger firms. Furthermore, Ajitabh and Momaya

(2004: 52) found that the RBV theory cannot guide organisations to ultimately integrate competitiveness with strategy.

3.2.2 Dynamic capability theory

The dynamic capability theory was founded by the seminal source Teece and Pisano (1994) and is a concept that integrates, reallocates and builds both internal and external resources to address an organisation's fast-changing environments (Majid et al., 2022: 278). Eisenhardt and Martin (2000: 12) explain dynamic capability as a process to be followed in a response to a sudden market change by integrating, reconfiguring and abandoning company resources. Madsen (2010: 5) attempted to summarise a basic framework formulated by dynamic capability literature. The framework explains that dynamic capability could be seen as an "evolutionary process" that first seeks to identify new ideas on how to solve existing problems within the organisation or review any new challenges that might have emerged. Secondly, the identified and potential ideas should be evaluated based on the efficiency of the organisation's current routines and the potential for creating new routines, based on previous experiences in the organisation. Finally, the process of implementing the selected ideas takes place within the structure of the organisation (Madsen, 2010: 6).

The process of the DCT has been criticised by the influential Mosakowski and McKelvey (1997: 65) as being repetitive and not effective. Madsen (2015: 2) has also found that DCT can unfortunately only be evaluated through measurable results and cannot be reviewed individually. Furthermore, DCT consists of four different concepts that pose a challenge due to the effectiveness of DCT being dependable on the specific situation in which the organisation finds itself (Madsen, 2010: 8). Wang and Ahmed (2007: 31) argue that the dynamic capability theory is mostly advantageous to an organisation's long term performance.

When reviewing RBV and DCT theories, they do not seem to capture well the contextual issues associated with food truck businesses. A food truck business has many unique complexities in that it is always mobile, it has particular food safety requirements, specific regulations and definitive training needs. These factors are missing in the theories based on RBV and DCT. Hence, the study proposed a conceptual framework developed from literature and categorises the factors into external and internal. The external factors are awareness, regulations and marketing. Internal factors are skills, business plan and financial resources. The aim was to explore these concepts as a guide and allow more factors to emerge from the study and explain the sustainability of the food truck business in the context of NMB.

3.3 Laws and regulations

According to SME South Africa (2021: 3), all businesses in the country that are making or selling food items must obtain a business license and must comply with the listed health and safety regulations. Business owners who work with food products must obtain a health and safety permit and zoning permits for operating in specific locations as well as a liquor license should they want to sell any alcoholic beverages. All food businesses must also obtain a certificate of acceptability, which stipulates the type of food products being handled, the preparation processes, processing of food items and packaging. Furthermore, the law in South Africa requires a gas compliance certificate from all homes and businesses that work with liquid gas for cooking purposes. Finally, businesses that exceed R1 million taxable supply within a twelve-month consecutive period must register for VAT (SME South Africa, 2021: 3). The regulations in South Africa are not as strict as many of the other bylaws and regulations in other countries. The majority of the major cities in the USA and Canada for example have many regulations that food truck entrepreneurs are required to follow and adhere to.

Kukic (2013: 26) conducted a study and compared the bylaws and regulations of Vancouver and Toronto in Canada. In Vancouver, the food truck permits only allow the trucks to operate outside the downtown city area and between 7 am and 11 pm. A food truck is not allowed to be stationed in a specific area for longer than one hour without serving any customers. This leads to the food trucks moving around the city constantly and finding different spots around all public streets around the city. Toronto on the other hand requires all food vendors to obtain a business license and permit that allows food truck operators to reserve a location on public property for one calendar year (Kukic, 2013: 27).

Williams (2014: 717) found that several cities in the USA keep updating the policies and regulations of food trucks to maintain food and traffic safety. City leaders are aware of the growth of the industry and the increasing interest of the consumers and often take it into consideration when adopting regulations. The food truck phenomenon in America was in its infancy around 2008 and the laws for street food back then only focused on selling permits for a stationary food cart vendor. There were no specific laws instructing food truck entrepreneurs where and when they could operate, as long as they had a legal permit to sell food items (Strand, 2015: 50).

Kregor (2015: 14) argues that the generation of new food truck owners has somehow overcome the political challenges and policies implemented years ago to regulate food carts and trucks from the past. The food truck businesses seem to grow and thrive even with the heavy restrictions that are still in play. Kregor (2015: 14) found that the main reasons businesses are able to overcome these

challenges is the positive effect of social media, and entrepreneurs being able to directly communicate with consumers and continue to build relationships.

Eldridge (2015: 63) found that many food truck entrepreneurs in Oklahoma City experience difficulties in fully comprehending the regulations and passing the strict health and safety requirements in order to run their businesses. He also found (2015: 63) that despite the challenges in complying with the regulations the food truck entrepreneurs describe the city officials and health department as being helpful and supportive when more information or guidelines are required. The sense of community amongst food truck entrepreneurs is also found to be very supportive as many new owners receive assistance from experienced owners in order to ensure all food trucks comply with policy and adhere to existing regulations (Eldridge, 2015: 117). He found (2015: 116) that food truck entrepreneurs generally desire policy and regulatory compliance in order to build good relationships with policymakers.

Esparza, Walker and Rossman (2013: 9) found that the regulations for mobile food vending in Chicago are amongst the most restrictive. The policies in Chicago were updated in 2012 with some relaxed regulations regarding the preparation of food on food trucks with fully equipped kitchens, and the distance to other restaurants has decreased from a proximity of 200 feet to 100. Food truck operators in Southern California have seen a policy update resulting in no proximity limit and the entrepreneurs welcome these updates in policy in order for them to increase their business opportunities and ultimate success (Esparza, et al., 2013: 10). Shpigel (2015: 388) agrees that Chicago's laws around mobile food vending are significantly stricter than other cities in America. Shpigel (2015: 388) argues that Chicago would benefit from amended mobile food vending laws as less restrictive regulations do not necessarily mean more danger to public health and traffic congestion.

Martin (2014: 1873) reports that Chicago's restrictions on food vendors have proven to be a major challenge for food truck entrepreneurs. All food items had to be sold in pre-packed packaging and already cooked in licensed kitchens prior to being sold from the food truck. No cooking was allowed on food trucks and it created a barrier for entrepreneurs to producing fresh, high-quality food for their customers. The operating hours for food trucks were only between 10 am and 10 pm and in no close proximity to any restaurants. In 2012, the regulation was passed for food trucks to be able to cook on the vehicle, as long as it had undergone a health inspection. Food trucks were also able to operate at any time during the day or night but are still restricted to a maximum of 2 hours in one specific spot. Martin (2014: 1873) found the updates in policy were still somewhat controversial and restrictive, as food trucks were required to install GPS systems in order for the city council to monitor compliance and especially the two-hour rule.

Williams (2014: 708) agrees that a number of regulations are outdated and challenging to most food truck entrepreneurs. In many major US cities, there are large areas that are completely off-limits for the trading of food vendors. A total of nineteen cities in the USA only allow mobile food vendors to remain in a specific spot for a short period of time. This forces the food trucks to keep moving around, rather than focusing on producing and selling food. There are even five cities that still prevent any food vendor from being stationed at all unless flagged down by a customer. Williams (2014: 709) argues that such regulations were implemented years ago specifically for ice cream trucks and have not been updated since the food truck phenomenon.

According to an article written by Davidson (2013: 16) for the *New York Times*, street food is regulated in New York City by the departments of Health, Sanitation, Transportation and Consumer Affairs. Food truck entrepreneurs in the city feel that it is nearly impossible to operate a business within the mobile food industry without breaking some of the many laws and regulations. Food trucks for example are not allowed to park within close proximity to a school or a public market. Davidson (2013: 1) reports that food truck operators complain that enforcement of the regulations in the city is erratic and inconsistent. Food trucks in certain parts of the city are rarely policed whilst others are inspected by a dedicated team of “vendor-busting cops”. A number of entrepreneurs have found that operating food trucks in New York City is a risky business that is restricted by many laws. Davidson (2013: 1) interviewed two entrepreneurs who have brick-and-mortar restaurants as well as food trucks and both owners agreed that the food trucks are affected by many more regulations and restrictions. One entrepreneur confessed to only keeping his truck as a moving billboard for his restaurant.

Strand (2015: 63) argues that strict laws with regard to food truck businesses in the city of Philadelphia are limiting the business potential and growth in customers. Food truck entrepreneurs are encouraged to continue with their business ventures and support the potential of less restrictive laws for American street food.

Holmes, Dodds, Deen, Lubana, Munson & Quigley (2018: 498) reports that starting a food truck business in Toronto requires the entrepreneur to obtain a “Refreshment Truck License” together with requirements to be met by the Standards and Safety Association, the health department, the fire department and the electrical safety authorities. Food trucks in Toronto undergo regular inspections by the health department and all owners and staff are required to be “certified food handlers” (Holmes, et al, 2018: 498). The regulations in Toronto stipulate that a food truck business is not allowed to operate within 50 meters of brick-and-mortar restaurants. Holmes, et al (2018: 498) agree that this is a major challenge for food truck entrepreneurs as Toronto has over 7 500 restaurants and not being able to park within 50 meters from any of the restaurants creates a huge barrier for business.

Sadhale and Shetty (2018: 93) suggest that food truck entrepreneurs and restaurant owners should be able to work together against rigid regulations within the food industry that might restrict growth. Food trucks have the ability to bring people outdoors and restaurants should support the trucks doing business in their areas as it attracts more people. Restaurants can then benefit from the people supporting the food trucks, as customers might notice the eateries and decide to dine there next, as the food truck might have a limited menu.

3.4 Health and Safety

BizBolts (Pty) Ltd (2021: 1) acknowledges that it is extremely important to adhere to health and safety regulations no matter how challenging it might be for food truck operators. The preparation and storage of food items has to be a priority in order to prevent food contamination and the risk of foodborne illnesses. Okumus and Sonmez (2019: 218) agree and warn food truck operators not only to follow the minimum requirements when it comes to food hygiene but to ensure that all is done to prevent contamination when working with food. Shpigel (2015: 382) found that food trucks are inspected more often than restaurants and although food truck entrepreneurs might see this as a challenge and unfair practice, it should rather be seen as a benefit. Regulated food trucks are able to operate and serve their consumers knowing that they pose no health risk or hazard (Shpigel, 2015: 382).

The Department of Public Health is the regulating body for food truck vendors in Los Angeles (Rishi, 2013: 50). Health inspectors usually inspect the food trucks while stationary and not operating, although there are food truck owners who have reported that inspectors have arrived while in-service and on-site for inspections (Rishi, 2013: 50). Rishi (2013: 50) found that in Los Angeles, all street food vendors are required to meet regulations as listed in the state food retail code and must obtain a permit issued by the county health department. The city of Chicago also maintains a major focus on ensuring that all food vendors uphold a strict and high standard of all health and safety practices for its residents (Shpigel, 2015: 379). Okumus and Sonmez (2019: 217) argue that all food truck operators should display their inspection grades and licenses in order for customers to review the information.

Okumus and Sonmez (2019: 217) reiterate that basic hygiene practices, such as washing hands, are crucial in order to prevent foodborne illnesses. Many food vendors find hygiene practices challenging due to limitations such as the absence of running water (Rishi, 2013: 50). Other challenges as listed by Rishi (2013: 50) include sinks that big enough for washing utensils, and storage of food at the required temperatures.

In Chicago the police are able to ban a food truck from operating should there be any concern about public health. At some stage, Chicago's regulations did not allow any cooking of food on mobile food trucks in order to prevent disease outbreaks. The City has many strict clauses in support of public health which include specifics on refrigeration requirements, storage of food on the truck and details on the serving of any dairy products (Shpigel, 2015: 379). Okumus and Sonmez (2019: 218) also highlight the importance of the storage of food at the correct temperature in order to prevent bacterial growth which can lead to serious outbreaks. It is a challenge for food truck entrepreneurs to have health inspections during busy times, and they prefer to schedule these during the quieter months. However, Okumus and Sonmez (2019: 218) argues that the inspection during slow periods is not always accurate as less food is stored and not much cooking takes place.

Yoon and Chung (2018: 194) argue that it is the joint effort of all food truck owners to minimize the public's perceived hygiene risks of food truck services by adhering to regulations and guidelines stipulated by health departments.

3.5 Business strategy

Developing a business plan is the one thing that can set any business apart from its counterparts (BizBolts (Pty) Ltd, 2021: 1). There are many risks in starting a food truck business and having a clear and well-planned business plan will assist in identifying these risks and plans on how to minimise them. SME South Africa (2021: 4) lists unexpected and constant loadshedding as one of the biggest risks for businesses in the country. Having funds available to start a business is important as the actual truck, kitchen equipment and layout and design of the truck is a major expense (BizBolts (Pty) Ltd, 2021: 1). The importance for any business is to balance good quality and price in order to guarantee profitability. Good "inventory management, market research, hard-hitting sales and good customer relationship management" are all traditional business practices that are key to a successful business (SME South Africa, 2021: 3).

eNCA mobile journalist, Mahlo (2016: 1) interviewed a food truck entrepreneur from Johannesburg who noted that not all South African markets provide a solid platform for food truck businesses. It has been pointed out that for the past five years, two of the biggest and most popular markets in Johannesburg do not include any food trucks among their vendors. The food truck owner interviewed by Mahlo (2016: 1) added that choosing the correct location for a food truck is critical to the business, and secondly is understanding the target market together with the pricing of the food items.

SME South Africa (2021: 4) warns that starting one's own business is risky and challenging, but suggests finding support from other entrepreneurs in the food truck industry who can share their best practices, knowledge and expertise.

Rishi (2013: 50) found that in Los Angeles, traditional food trucks and carts that have been there for many years remain steady and visible on the streets. Rishi (2013: 50) argues that the food truck industry is easy to enter, but risky as more and more new gourmet food truck businesses seem to open but also close just as fast. Rishi (2013: 63) therefore agrees with the importance of having a good business plan, a marketable product and a brand name that stands out amongst all the other trucks, especially on social media.

Kregor (2015: 15) argues that many new food truck entrepreneurs struggle to enter the industry due to established businesses making it difficult for new competitors. Kregor (2015: 15) also agrees that finding the necessary support and guidance from more popular and longstanding food truck businesses may assist in achieving success.

Thomas (2016: 51) found that food truck business owners in Auckland, New Zealand, feel particularly challenged in that they are not considered as part of the food tourism products in the area. Food truck entrepreneurs perceive the city council of Auckland to have a "lack of vision" and are unsupportive of the growth and success of their businesses. Similar to food truck owners in the USA, the food truck entrepreneurs in Auckland also feel particularly constrained by strict regulations, a list of licensing and high rental fees that make it difficult for them to survive and grow (Thomas, 2016: 51).

Strand (2015: 63) states that the new generation of food truck businesses has huge potential to offer the public a modern alternative to the normal tradition of dining out at restaurants. Strand (2015: 63) agrees that a venture into a food truck business is not easy, but it has been proven to be a successful enterprise if planned well. Contemporary food truck businesses are seen as an established model with well-organised alliances and all-year business operations. The business world in general has embraced the potential of food truck entrepreneurs (Strand, 2015: 63).

Eldridge (2015: 90) found that food truck businesses have different and more challenges than normal brick-and-mortar restaurants. For example, many food trucks operate with generators that could break down during service, or staff could struggle with a frozen water line in winter, and then on top of it all, owners often have to deal with health inspectors. Eldridge (2015: 90) argues that many brick-and-mortar restaurants do not face these types of challenge. Hence the tight bond that one often finds amongst food truck entrepreneurs. The shared struggles, long hours at street festivals and experiences that food truck entrepreneurs go through bring them closer together (Eldridge, 2015: 90).

Williams (2014: 717) found that starting a food truck business gives entrepreneurs the opportunity to enter the food industry and the potential to grow the business into an established brick-and-mortar restaurant. Williams (2014: 717) also found that restaurants that opt to start a food truck business expand their brand and reach additional consumers. A food truck has the ability to grow the business by tapping into larger catering opportunities, festivals, outreach programmes and other untapped markets (Williams, 2014: 717).

Holmes et al. (2018: 497) agree that food truck businesses are able to move freely and frequently, and build a clientele from various areas. The disadvantage of the mobility of a food truck is that it is not able to promote a standard spot where return customers will always be sure to get their favourite food. Holmes et al. (2018: 497) argue that it does raise a concern in developing a standard customer base.

Luu, Nikazm, Yeganeh and Song (2015: 15) have researched the triple bottom line framework of a food truck business in Vancouver and found that in general, the projection of such a business proves to be viable and profitable. An article written by Bednar (2019: 15) in *BusinessWest.com* explains that food truck businesses in the Pioneer Valley are not an everyday sight but are rather more frequently associated with music festivals, fairs and community events. Bednar (2019: 17) reports that food truck entrepreneurs often feel that they have to start their businesses from scratch, once the winter season is over. This makes it difficult for the business to build momentum and plan for growth.

Sadhale and Shetty (2018: 93) found that the limited storage space on a food truck is a challenge and could often result in under-delivering and running out of stock. A recommendation is to study the sales patterns and keep food items accordingly in order to keep customers happy and avoid running the risk of losing business.

McGinnis (2012: 45) asserts the importance of a strategic marketing plan for a sustainable position within the food industry market. All food truck entrepreneurs should understand the “importance of the triple bottom line” that includes the social, economic and environmental elements in order to create brand awareness and attract customers (McGinnis, 2012: 45).

Not all entrepreneurs understand entrepreneurship: one needs to think and act quickly, and be creative and aware of trends and needs. Some food truck entrepreneurs have adopted a method of “vend-sharing” – described when one food truck is used by different vendors at different times in order to improve or sustain the businesses (Tirpak, 2018: 169). Food truck owners in San Antonio have benefitted from the number of events, gatherings and private functions they are able to cater to.

Many truck owners describe private events as a guarantee of profit and growth for their businesses (Tirpak, 2018: 236).

There are various companies and websites in America that support mobile food associations to assist new as well as established food truck entrepreneurs with the law and street vending regulations in certain cities (Strand, 2015: 20). Strand (2015: 20) found that he had enough evidence to show that “the food truck trend is here to stay” due to the massive following and support that the food truck industry has in America. Strand (2015: 21) confirms that the gourmet food truck entrepreneurs of America have found their niche and have established a good position in the food industry of the country.

Erb (2014: 50) found that every food truck owner agreed that the industry was tough and required hard work and long hours. Erb (2014: 51) confirms that the success of food truck markets is dependable on the weather conditions and that the earnings vary greatly, depending on the season and sometimes even the day. Erb (2014: 51) interviewed food truck owners whose business plan included closing their trucks during winter, as the business would suffer too much of a loss due to Boston’s extremely cold days. Erb (2014: 54) also found that many US food truck owners were gourmet chefs who would have liked to open their own restaurant business, but could not afford the high risks and cost of a brick-and-mortar restaurant. Erb’s (2014: 73) findings show that food truck owners have mastered the balance of being competitive with each other but also working in cooperation to ensure a good reputation with their customers. The love for the outdoors, the fact that they are a small community and the mandatory regulations of the city government play a vital role in the success of the food truck businesses (Erb, 2014: 73).

It is evident that the understanding of a food truck business plan, the growth strategy and a good business model is critical to the survival of a business (Truong, 2019: 61). A business model should be used to explain the plan to generate products or service for a specific market in order to generate revenue. Growth strategies could include a plan eventually to expand the food truck to a restaurant or have more than one food truck or even the selling of the business for a profit. Truong (2019: 62) highlights the importance of good business operations for food trucks, as well as being aware of the regulations and required licenses to operate. It is also important to conduct routine checks on the truck and the equipment on a daily basis and to plan for regular maintenance. Finally, attention to high-quality product delivery, consistency in food portion size, tasty menu options and good hygiene are all aspects that will ensure a successful food truck business (Truong, 2019: 62). Financial planning is important for any business to succeed and Truong (2019: 63) suggests that it is very important to budget with care and to avoid under-capitalisation.

Foong (2018) points out that in NMB the cost of hosting events has escalated, resulting in high vendor fees. The increase in cost impacts menu pricing and forces many food truck entrepreneurs to be selective as to where they trade. As disposable income becomes a scarcer commodity, vendors and market owners will have to continuously reinvent themselves to remain relevant and stay in business. In an article by Steyn (2020: 1) on the food truck business in Cape Town, it is reported that the entrepreneurs feel that they are not being considered in the current bylaws as they are either categorised as a restaurant or as informal traders, but neither is applicable.

Other challenges include operational issues such as waste management and hygiene. Restaurants and food trucks have to adhere to the same health and safety protocols, even though food trucks and general street vendors do not necessarily have access to running water (Petersen, 2014: 176). Truong (2019: 44) highlights the importance of waste management and the proper implantation thereof to avoid health issues and unhappy customers. It is difficult to keep food trucks clean and hygienically sound. Another challenge mentioned by Eldridge (2015: 39) is the barrier to obtaining licenses for new entrepreneurs wanting to start out. One has to obtain a permit to trade before being able to start a food truck business and that could potentially be a lengthy and costly process (Eldridge, 2015: 39).

3.6 Skills

Food truck staff need a number of critical skills, which should include a good work ethic, an optimistic and warm personality, empathy towards customers, good knowledge of products, marketing skills, multitasking and creativity. Training is extremely important to ensure staff are equipped to do the required jobs, but poor management and the lack of the owners' presence at the food truck could also have a bad effect on the business (Truong, 2019: 61).

3.6.1 Staff and management

Human resources can either damage or contribute to the development and success of a food truck business (Truong, 2019: 61). A major challenge for many food truck owners is to find skilled and experienced staff (SME South Africa, 2021: 4). Strand (2015: 43) found that skilful chefs improve the production and the quality of dishes served by food trucks. BizBolts (Pty) Ltd (2021: 1) suggests employing a chef or even an experienced cook in order to produce good quality food and maintain a high level of standardised dishes. It is also important for staff to receive extensive training on the products on offer and for front-line staff to be quick in taking orders, engaging with consumers and promoting menu items (BizBolts (Pty) Ltd, 2021: 1).

Truong (2019: 53) reports that unsupervised staff can have a major negative influence on a food truck business that can even lead to failure. Inconsistency and variation in the quality of meals will result in

the loss of customers. It is therefore important for staff to be trained correctly and be supervised by the owner to ensure that consistency is maintained at all times. Seasonal staff is problematic for many entrepreneurs and Truong (2019: 53) suggests that limiting staff changes could resolve the problem.

Truong (2019: 62) found that employees with good skills, such as multitasking, sales, and serving abilities together with a good attitude and a cheerful personality are favoured amongst food truck owners. High staff turnover should be avoided as it could lead to inconsistent food quality and service levels that could result in the loss of returning customers. Truong (2019: 62) found that in Finland specifically, it is of great importance for staff to be able to speak the local language in order to engage with customers.

Strand (2015: 39) found that an important facet of the success of gourmet food trucks is to have at least one person involved who has good experience and understanding of the restaurant business. Strand (2015: 39) states that the consensus of entrepreneurs is that working in a food truck is an extremely difficult and tiring job that is unsustainable without any previous experience in the food service industry. Strand (2015: 39) also found that food truck owners confirmed the main factor contributing to the success of the business is the importance of having somebody who is innovative with menu ideas, able to use available ingredients and able to combine good food flavours.

3.6.2 Menu development

BizBolts (Pty) Ltd (2021: 1) reports that the decision of dishes for the menu is becoming more difficult for food truck entrepreneurs as consumers are more health conscious now. Consumers are also interested in the ingredients and might go as far as inquiring about the source of the produce used in the dishes as well as enquiring about the nutritional value. Supporting local businesses and using sustainably or organically sourced ingredients is important to many customers. SME South Africa (2021: 4) agrees and suggests that entrepreneurs must keep on developing new menu items and test different dishes regularly. Major challenges for many food trucks are finding reliable suppliers with good quality ingredients. SME South Africa (2021: 4) warns against falling into the trap of buying cheaper products that affect the ultimate quality and taste of the dishes. It is evident that menu planning therefore is a major skill and requires good planning and organisation.

Holmes et al. (2018: 504) highlight the biggest challenge of sourcing local and organic food items that are costly and not always easily sourced due to seasonality. The menu items become more expensive if, for example, only organic ingredients are used. Some entrepreneurs report that they would rather charge a premium price for organic and fresher ingredients as they have seen the effect it has on their sales and the returning customers, while others see the cost as being excessive and not justifiable.

Bednar (2019: 28) reports that a number of food truck owners adjust their menus based on the fresh products in season and the fresh produce available from farms.

A well-planned menu with pricing and standard recipes is important for the purchasing of stock and for reducing wastage. Good preparation, planning and the ability to react rapidly to the market are important Truong (2019: 62). Strand (2015: 43) also warns against a food truck menu that only offers a single type of food and suggests that entrepreneurs opt for a varied nutritional collection of items to attract customers.

Food trucks are able to offer unique meals that are not found in other restaurants within their proximity. Kukic (2013: 63) suggest that a food truck business should always focus on dishes that are absent from traditional menus and incorporate specialised and niche meals that build the food culture of the city they operate in.

On the other hand, Kukic (2013: 61) also points out the constraints on the number of dishes that a food truck can offer on a menu due to the lack of storage and space to cook. The size of the truck is also very small, so not many people are able to operate within the truck on different menu items, but rather one or two people have to cook, prepare and serve speciality dishes. Kukic (2013: 61) also sees the benefit of food truck entrepreneurs being able to constantly change the menu depending on the ingredients available and what is in season.

3.7 Location and premises

BizBolts (Pty) Ltd (2021: 1) highlight the importance of the correct location for a food truck business. It is not only important to find a good location, but also to ensure that the location is set in the area of the specific target market. One also needs to take into account the road traffic and ease of access to the truck. SME South Africa (2021: 4) also suggests that food truck entrepreneurs need to study the whereabouts of the target market and the movement at specific times of the day to ensure optimum productivity. It is important to always be conscious of other food trucks in the same area and ensure that the products on offer are unique. SME South Africa (2021: 4) agrees on the importance of the logistics of location, and of thinking about how easy it is for the consumers to reach the food truck. SME South Africa (2021:4) found that a food truck business can grow to success much faster when the correct location has been identified.

More and more entrepreneurs are entering the food truck industry in the hope of success similar to the forerunners, but at some point, the market will be oversaturated and only the biggest and most successful will survive (Marrs, 2012:1). Eldridge (2015:96) and Erb (2014:30) advocate that the biggest threat to food truck owners is the oversaturated streets and a lack of city infrastructure that delays

growth. Eldridge (2015:100) adds to this the costs and resources required to maintain and improve public spaces and infrastructure used by food truck businesses in a city. The effect on the food truck industry could be negative if public spaces such as walkways, gardens and parks are not adequately maintained. Steyn (2020: 1) found that in South Africa many food truck entrepreneurs struggle to survive as more and more areas are zoned for agricultural use or other developments. Commercial activity is therefore not permitted, leaving food truck entrepreneurs with less space to operate from.

Food truck entrepreneurs in Vancouver, Canada have major challenges in finding the correct location due to the strict legislation that prevents them from vending within the bounds of school grounds, beaches, parks or private property. Food trucks are also not allowed to be stationed within 50 meters of other businesses that offer similar food items (Kukic, 2013: 26). In Toronto, food trucks are not allowed in any location that is within 25 meters of a restaurant.

Sadhale and Shetty (2018: 93) embarked on a study in India that investigated the challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs and location was found to be the primary concern. In India, permission to park and operate from a dedicated area seems to be a major challenge. Dealing with the local municipality and licensing offices is a constant battle for food truck entrepreneurs (Sadhale & Shetty 2018: 93).

3.8 Customers

Yoon and Chung (2018: 195) conducted a study that focused on millennial consumers and their perceived risks and benefits from buying a meal at food trucks. The findings concluded that lack of hygiene is the biggest risk and convenience is the most beneficial for buying food at food trucks. Millennial consumers are therefore concerned about unhygienic conditions in food trucks which includes incorrect food storage and the use of stale ingredients (Yoon & Chung, 2018: 195).

Shin, Im and Severt's (2020: 140) study found that food truck customers have a high demand for unique and innovative foods. Amongst the disadvantages raised by the consumers were sanitation, speed of service, value for money and quality of food. Shin et al. (2020: 140) argue that due to the low overhead costs of a food truck business, entrepreneurs should be able to reconsider the menu prices. Shin et al. (2020: 140) suggest that lower food prices should be a motive for consumers to support food trucks. Another suggestion is to increase the perception of customers' concerns regarding sanitation. It will be beneficial to send all staff for regular food safety training to keep customers healthy and happy (Shin et. al, 2020: 140).

McNeil and Young (2019: 343) found that food truck consumers' needs include good service, value for money, brand personality and the physical environment of the truck. Interestingly the study did not

show that good quality food is important, but it could be due to the increase in quality of food from food trucks over the years and consumers expecting nothing less. Failure to deliver good quality food will lead to the dissatisfaction of customers and the ultimate failure of the food truck business (McNeil & Young, 2019: 343). McNeil and Young (2019: 343) agree with the findings of Shin et al. (2020: 140) in that pricing of food items is important and food truck owners need to be strategic about the menu pricing in order to attract customers. Creating value for money is the most important aspect for a food truck entrepreneur, according to McNeil and Young (2019: 344). This will ensure returning consumers and ultimately a growing business. Good service and building of relationships by food truck staff is another important aspect for consumers (McNeil & Young 2019: 345). The service timeframe is very limited and often the food truck staff only have a few minutes to engage with the consumer while the meal is prepared and packaged. McNeil and Young (2019: 345) found that quality service includes the accuracy of orders, good attitude of staff, and knowledge and helpfulness of staff towards the customers.

Ideris, Zainum, Nordin, Zainol (2017: 85) have researched factors that influence food choice by food truck consumers in Malaysia. The findings show that most consumers are influenced by the cost of the meal, followed by time constraints, food quality, and the level of service. One of the biggest challenges faced by food truck owners is creating constant awareness and keeping consumers interested (Ideris et al., 2017: 85).

Truong (2019: 62) highlights the importance of attracting and keeping customers by selecting high-quality, tasty and consistent meals. Truong (2019: 63) has noted the importance of the location of the food truck as making or breaking the overall business. A truck might be located in an area with high traffic, but if the customers are not food truck supporters, then the busy traffic will not make any difference to the sales. It therefore is a good reminder to seek a location that will allow easy and regular access for the customers.

3.9 Proposing a conceptual framework

Despite the increasing popularity of the food truck industry in NMB, there is no way of accurately evaluating the factors which influence the sustainability of a food truck business in the metro. Entrepreneurs are unable to predict the long-term success of their endeavours, due to the lack of studies on the sustainability of the food truck industry.

“South Africa's leading source of rich brand content and retail promotional intelligence, Silo,” posted an article by Ash (2018:1), warning food truck entrepreneurs that the business venture could come and go with time as it is popular at the moment, but could reduce in popularity very quickly. Ash

recommends a one-year, five-year and ten-year plan for food truck entrepreneurs, with the ultimate goal to eventually grow the business into a restaurant. Hawk (2013: 113) affirms that the new cohort of food truck entrepreneurs can grow and thrive by either remaining gourmet food truck businesses or venturing off into another business in the food industry. Other researchers warn that the market can easily be oversaturated and only the biggest and most successful will survive (Marrs, 2012:1).

Several studies have been conducted on the success of food trucks, and a few researchers have reached conclusions about the success of the business. Strand (2015: 39) found that there is a strong link between the direct involvement of the owner and having an experienced chef or the owner being the chef, to ensure the success and growth of a food truck business. McGinnis (2012: 46) highlights the importance of key marketing concepts that an owner needs to understand, namely the triple bottom line of social, environmental and economic elements for the growth of the business and in order to continually attract customers. There are five factors that Truong (2019: 63) found are most important for a food truck business to be successful, namely a good business strategy, having skilled staff, being aware of the regulations to operate, marketing, and finally finances. Worku (2013: 68) found a number of socioeconomic “factors that affect the long-term survival of small businesses”, namely a shortage in skills required by entrepreneurs, the lack of guidance provided to new business owners and the lack of relevant operational skills. Myrick (2018: 1) warns entrepreneurs that starting a food truck business is challenging and owning one in a weak economy will definitely be very difficult. It is therefore important for food truck entrepreneurs to understand and implement (or where appropriate, avoid) these above-mentioned factors to ensure the sustainability of their business.

DiPietro (2016: 1220) conducted research showcasing the primary areas that have been covered in previous studies related to the restaurant and food service industry. The areas include operations, marketing, quality of service, finance, innovation and hygiene. It is also important to review the motivations for starting a food truck business. Mahlangu (2019: 40) found that in Gauteng food truck entrepreneurs started their business in the need to pursue independence and follow a passion.

The various points mentioned above will be used towards a conceptual framework for this study with the majority of the factors found by Truong and the primary areas listed by DiPietro being the main variables. The variables include entrepreneurial skills, marketing (social, environmental and economic), short-term and long-term business plans, policy and regulations, and awareness of the industry and finances. The question remains – even if food truck businesses in NMB implement the factors mentioned in previous research, would it guarantee a sustained, long-term business in the industry?

Reviewing the aspects that have been found in previous research, the key assumption is that both internal and external factors contribute to a sustainable food truck business. The external factors cannot be controlled by food truck entrepreneurs and include aspects such as government policy and city regulations (McGinnis, 2012: 34) as well as the economy (DiPietro, 2016: 1213). Internal factors can be controlled by the entrepreneur and include a good business strategy for growth and maturity (Myrick, 2012: 19) as well as good entrepreneurial and operational skills (Truong, 2019: 62). Figure 1 below summarises the factors contributing towards a sustainable food truck business.

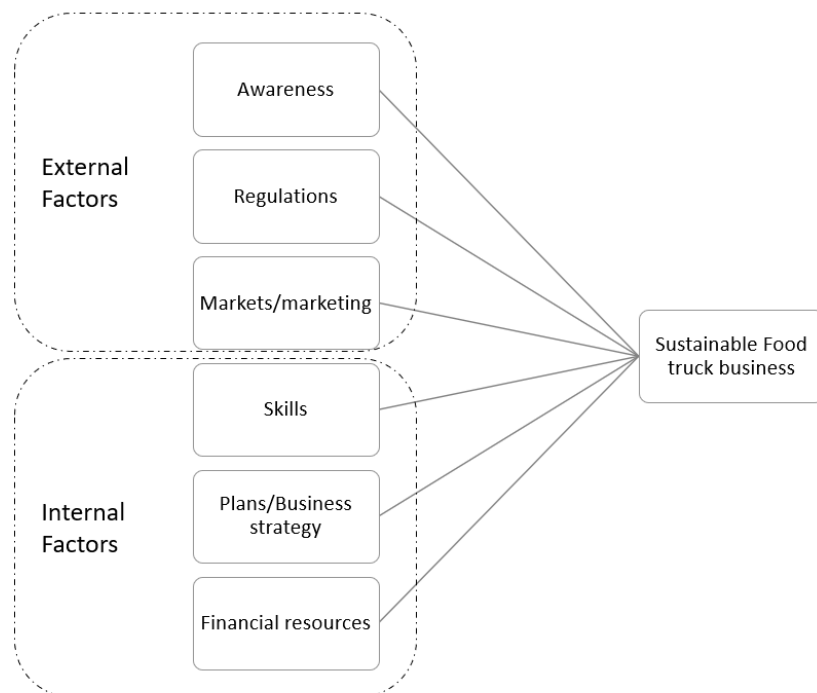


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Assumptions about the conceptual framework are that once a food truck owner implements both internal and external factors, as illustrated above, a sustainable food truck business is possible. The owner has to ensure they have the required skills, have a business plan in place and have the necessary financial resources available. It is also important to be aware of the external factors that could have an impact on the business, namely the market, awareness of the industry, and of the regulations that govern the industry. Further, the use of the conceptual framework is to act as a lens that can provide a manageable scope of this study and support uncovering interesting findings to answer the research question guiding the study.

3.10 Summary

Reviewing the literature conducted over the years, it is evident that a food truck business is not much different from running any other business. The challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs might be unique to the industry, but a good business plan and focusing on the triple bottom line are very much the same. Skilled staff and good management are important for any business to grow and be sustainable. Truong's (2019: 62) basic finding of good planning and the ability to react rapidly to the market is important. Ultimately McNeil and Young's (2019: 343) findings on failing to deliver high-quality, good and tasty food will lead to unhappy customers and be the result of a food truck business closing down are correct. External and internal factors have been identified and formulated into a conceptual framework to guide this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was a theoretical perspective of the study as well as a literature review on challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs. In this chapter, the research methodology will be discussed by explaining the research paradigm, the research design, and the research method. The research approach and the sample size will be explained. Data analysis, validity and ethics will also be discussed.

4.2 Research philosophy/paradigm

Willis, Muktha & Nilakanta (2007: 10) explains that research philosophy has two aspects, namely ontology and epistemology. The fundamental aim of metaphysics is to determine the “characteristic of things that exist” referred to as ontology and “how can we know the things that exist”, referred to as epistemology. Ontology is to explore the nature of existence and determine what can and cannot be real (Willis, Muktha & Nilakanta, 2007: 10). Epistemology is to review the theory of knowledge that guides the researcher to determine how “we know what we know” and the “relationship between the knower and what is known” (Tuli, 2010: 99). Tuli (2010: 103) further explains that ontology and epistemology are what influences the type of methodology chosen for the research, and this, in turn, guides the research design choice as well as the instruments used in the research. Qualitative methodology is therefore usually “underpinned by interpretivist epistemology and constructionist ontology” (Tuli, 2010: 102).

There are three main research philosophies, namely positivistic, interpretive and critical research. The positivistic approach focuses more on research that can be explained scientifically. The research aims to explain behaviour through data that is measurable and subjective (Tuli, 2010: 99). Critical research attempts to review myths and expose information to transform society and empower people (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2021: 38); while interpretive constructivist research reviews the world through experiences and interpretations as explained by people and their interactions with the world around them (Tuli, 2010: 100). The philosophy used in this study was interpretive research due to the nature of the problem statement and the research question. The problem statement is, “No measurable approach exists to evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB”. The primary research question of this study is what are the perceptions of NMB food truck entrepreneurs on the factors influencing the sustainability of their businesses.

The goal of a study conducted qualitatively is to understand an insider's perspective of the group being researched (Tuli, 2010: 102). The researcher of this study conducted face-to-face interviews and spent time with each entrepreneur for in-depth conversations to gain a better understanding of their experience in the food truck industry. In an attempt to answer the research question of this study, the researcher aimed to gain more knowledge from the food truck entrepreneurs in NMB through their experiences and stories told whilst conducting the interviews.

4.3 Research design

Research design is described as the structure that the research study has taken and includes a representation of the type of data, the sample size, the data-collection method and the theoretical aspect adopted for the research (Akhtar, 2016: 68). For this study, a combination of an inductive approach and case study was used, as a sample of participants from the food truck industry was selected to take part in a semi-structured interview. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018: 41) inductive theorising is used when a researcher moves from particular to more general themes and applies the data to wider theoretical concepts. It is therefore mostly stated as a "bottom-up approach" due to the inductive theorising allowing the researcher to build on existing theory but also to establish new theories (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 49).

Howitt and Cramer (2020: 386) explain that a semi-structured interview has the perfect balance between a broad investigation and a descriptive approach. Semi-structured interview techniques are usually used to collect detail about current activities, to seek new insights, pinpoint patterns and to recognise relationships amongst variables (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008: 113). The researcher therefore made use of semi-structured interviews for the collection of data for this study.

According to Tuli (2009: 37), the paradigm that guides the research activity also determines the selection of a specific research methodology. The research approach can be either qualitative or quantitative and is determined by the intention of the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009: 73). Qualitative methodology is an attempt to understand why people act a certain way or why things in the social world are the way they are by reviewing objective data (Tuli, 2009: 38). Quantitative methodology is an attempt to "quantify social phenomena" by collecting and analysing numerical or subjective data (Tuli, 2009: 61). Qualitative research is usually inductive while quantitative research is usually deductive.

In this study the aim is to generate theories from the food truck industry in NMB and is therefore inductive and qualitative in nature.

4.4 Research strategy

There are a number of different strategies that can be used in research, based on the specific aims of the study. There are experimental studies, grounded theory, action or case studies (Rashid et al., 2019: 5).

The use of a case study as a research design was motivated by the explanation of the seminal source, Yin (1994: 286), that case studies are usually preferred due to the researcher having limited to no control of the events and when the focus of the study includes the phenomenon of real-life context. According to Rashid et al., (2019: 5) case study research describes “real-life [phenomena]” and provides the possibility of identifying essential factors, relationships and processes. Case study research also supports multiple data collection methods and the researcher would be able to include interviews and the review of documents to strengthen data and arguments (Rashid et al., 2019: 8). Crowe, Cresswell, Robertson, Huby, Avery and Sheikh (2011: 1) also explain the use of case studies as a research approach to attempt to understand complex situations in its real-world context. For this study, the researcher used multiple cases of food truck entrepreneurs to have diverse views of their subjective ideas and experiences in operating their businesses in NMB. Crowe et al. (2011: 2) explain that studying multiple cases is important when attempting to gain an even broader understanding of a particular phenomenon as opposed to single case studies’ used typically to gain the understanding of a unique phenomenon.

4.5 Research method and sample

Only entrepreneurs in NMB who have a food truck or food trailer that is defined as a vehicle-mounted, mobile kitchen were considered for this study. Pushcarts, food stands or food stalls were not part of the research. The researcher identified that the sampling frame, food truck owners in NMB, comprised characteristics that were similar, based on the objective of the business. The food truck had to be privately owned and not belong to a franchise. The truck or trailer had to be equipped with cooking facilities in order to function as a kitchen and could not merely be a coffee van or ice cream truck. The business had to be registered and hold a permit to operate as a vendor within Nelson Mandela Bay.

Table 1: A summary of the participants

Entrepreneur ID	Gender of owner	Number of employees	Year Established
Participant 1	Male	4	2014
Participant 2	Male	0	2016
Participant 3	Male	2 casual staff	2018

Participant 4	Male	0	2021
Participant 5	Female	2 casual staff	2022
Participant 6	Female	1 casual staff	2018
Participant 7	Male	1	2020

The choice of sampling method was based on the objective of the research study and therefore the purposive sampling method was employed. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:142) explain that purposive sampling is when specific qualities are chosen by the researcher and added to the sample, based on specific characteristics. The purposive sampling method worked well in this study as only food truck entrepreneurs in NMB formed part of the sample. Convenience sampling was also used to select entrepreneurs based on their ease of accessibility to the researcher (Howitt & Cramer, 2020: 68) as well as the snowballing technique. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014: 143) explain the snowball sampling as a technique used for referrals from a participant to other participants that also fit the population being studied. After each interview was conducted, the researcher asked the entrepreneur if they had any further suggestions of other food truck owners who could be interviewed, and took down the names and contact details provided. The researcher also implemented the theoretical saturation point when it was deemed that any further data collection would be unnecessary. Saunders et al. (2017: 1899) suggest that a researcher reaches the point of saturation once they do not hear any new information within the interviews being conducted. After the sixth and seventh interviews, the researcher of this study found that no specific and new information had been gathered and had therefore reached a point of saturation. According to Saunders et al. (2018: 1899) the decision of saturation must be made before the coding process starts.

4.6 Research approach / qualitative approach

The research approach can be either qualitative or quantitative and is determined by the intention of the study (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009: 73). This research study attempted to comprehend the insights of food truck owners on the factors affecting the sustainability of the food truck businesses in NMB. In light of this, the utilisation of a qualitative analysis was fitting. Howitt and Cramer (2020: 365) explain that the goal of qualitative research is to explore, understand, and describe the findings. Some of the techniques used in qualitative research include field research, focus groups, case studies and interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 333). The use of semi-structured interviews, consisting of a range of open-ended questions was implemented for the collection of data (see Appendix E). Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:188) explain that the purpose of interviewing participants is to learn about

the specific opinions, views and beliefs regarding a particular occurrence. It is therefore clear why interviews were deemed an advantage to this study.

4.7 Data collection

Qualitative research typically concentrates on a small sample size, selected specifically for investigation and thorough understanding of a specific occurrence (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:173). The researcher of this study interviewed food truck entrepreneurs from NMB by means of open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview. There seem to be no official numbers published of food trucks operating within NMB, but the estimated number of trucks and food trailers is around thirty-five, according to the organiser and owner of the Baakens Food Truck Events in NMB (Foong, personal interview, 2022). The population as such is very small and the study drew data from a limited number of food trucks. Secondary data assisted the study in understanding the background and business context in which the food truck entrepreneurs operate. Information regarding health and safety, registrations and license certificates as well as bylaws and regulations provided solid context.

The interviews were audio-recorded with permission from the participants on a smartphone. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 263) describe interviewing as a methodical collection of data by asking a set of planned questions, cautiously listening and then recording the responses from the participants. The development of an interview guide for the semi-structured interviews was sourced from the literature studied. A pilot of the interview was conducted with one food truck entrepreneur before the rest of the entrepreneurs were contacted for a scheduled interview. The pilot helped to improve the reliability of the schedule and assisted with the amendment of two questions and the removal of one question from the original interview script. The changes to the questionnaire were discussed with the research supervisor before amendments were made. The question that was removed seemed to have confused the entrepreneur who formed part of the pilot, and it did not support any of the specific objectives of the study. Interviews were conducted over a five week period. The audio interviews were transcribed and stored in documents for analysis. The researcher took notes on important points during the interviews with the food truck entrepreneurs. Data for this study was collected once from the participants, hence the study was cross-sectional. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2021: 168) explain that a cross-sectional design is normally used in order to generate an overall idea of a specific phenomenon by gathering information only once from a number of people, as opposed to longitudinal survey designs that are used to collect factual information over a long period of time on a continual basis.

4.8 The interview process

According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:173) a researcher is able to obtain “depth of data, gathered from complex and multi-faceted phenomena in a specific social context” by using qualitative data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews were used in this research study. The interviews were conducted by the researcher by contacting food truck entrepreneurs in NMB and scheduling a convenient time and place with them for a face-to-face interview. Creswell and Creswell (2018: 263) suggest that the researcher should first make contact with the respondents to introduce themselves and briefly explain the reason for the interview request. During the interview, it is important to build trust and ensure that both the researcher and the respondent is relaxed and comfortable. The researcher should allow questions to flow naturally and provide explanations if needed (Creswell and Creswell, 2018: 263). All interviews conducted in this study were scheduled in advance with the participants at a time and place that was convenient. The interview script and questions were used to keep a structure to the interviews, but often more questions or further explanations were required to get more information or details from the participants. On average the interviews took around 45 minutes per interview.

4.9 Validity / trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers have to use different criteria than those who use quantitative research in order to determine the integrity of the findings. In quantitative studies the researchers are able to use large sample sizes, reliable research tools and random sampling techniques, to name a few examples. With qualitative research, the aim is to gain a better “understanding of a particular phenomenon within a specific context and to not generalise the findings to the broader population” (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021: 295). Qualitative research produces results that are not necessarily measurable due to the unique experience of each individual taking part in the study. The term trustworthiness is therefore mostly used in research conducted qualitatively in order to describe the reliability and validity of the study. According to the influential Lincoln and Guba (1985: 8), trustworthiness consists of four criteria, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. A brief description of each together with a short explanation of how each was applied in this study follows below.

4.9.1 Credibility

Credibility could be achieved by spending as much time as possible with the participants in order to attempt an improved understanding and insight of the participants in order to interpret the true and actual meanings of the collected data (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021: 295). The seminal source, Morrow (2005: 252) adds that spending time to observe the participants in action would be beneficial to the

research. Throughout the data collection phase of this study, the researcher spent time with three of the participants at their food trucks to observe and experience the business.

4.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is the ability to link the findings of the research to the theory and practice of other studies that have been conducted within a similar context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 8). Morrow (2005: 252) suggests that the researcher must provide enough information regarding the research process, the participants and the relationships that the researcher has built with the participants in order for the readers to determine what findings may be transferred to theory from other studies.

4.9.3 Dependability

Dependability is the level of quality of the processes used to integrate the data collection method, the data analysis and the theory that might have been created from the findings (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021: 295). Dependability can be accomplished through a detailed audit trail of the process and activities of the research as well as any influences that could impact the collected data, identifying themes and categories within the study. The audit trail and data must be reviewed by a peer researcher, advisor or colleagues (Morrow, 2005: 252). The collected and transcribed data for this study was shared with the research supervisor as part of member checking.

4.9.4 Confirmability

Lastly, confirmability describes the process of how the findings support interpretations formed by the researcher and the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 8). Morrow (2005: 252) warns that the findings should never represent the researcher's own beliefs, biases or pet theories and must be based on the integrity and findings of the actual data. Confirmability therefore requires the researcher to ensure that the data and findings are tied together in order for the reader to adequately confirm the findings (Morrow, 2005: 252).

4.10 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study by implementing the influential 6-step framework by the seminal source Braun and Clarke (2006: 77). According to Braun and Clarke (2006: 77), thematic analysis is an advantage for qualitative studies due to its being a “method rather than a methodology” and is therefore deemed not to be tied to a specific theoretical perspective. Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3354) explains Braun and Clarke’s 6-step framework as very useful to conduct thematic analysis as the researcher can move forward and backward between the data and does not have to be linear. The six steps include the following: “1. become familiar with the data, 2. Generate initial codes, 3.

Search for themes, 4. Review themes, 5. Define themes and 6. Write up” (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3354). The application of the steps is described in detail below:

Step 1 - Familiar with data: Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3355) highlight the importance of reading the transcripts more than once in an attempt to get familiar with all the collected data. The three sets of data used in this study include field notes, interview transcripts and secondary data. Keeping detailed field notes is important and will assist the data collection process in possibly identifying patterns and themes (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2021: 214). The interviews that were conducted in this study were transcribed and broad themes were created, based on secondary data that was previously studied.

Step 2 - Generating initial codes: Coding is a process to take large amounts of data and break them up into small segments of meaning. In this phase data should be organised systematically and meaningfully (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3355). Open coding was used to identify data related to the research questions, to identify themes that are relevant to the study, and to review new themes that could emerge. Microsoft Excel was used to code and group the data logically and systematically.

Step 3 - Searching for themes: Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3356) define themes as patterns that capture something significant about the research question. In this step, it is important to study the codes and identify specific themes that can be grouped. For this study, the codes were organised with the research question in mind and grouped to create broader themes.

Step 4 - Reviewing themes: In this phase, the identified themes from step 3 are reviewed, adapted and developed into initial themes that make sense and are relevant to the study. Reviewing the data that was grouped with each theme is vitally important in order to confirm that the data supports the study and that the themes do not overlap (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3358). Microsoft Excel spreadsheets were used to colour-code the themes for this study, to process, categorise and move the data, and to rearrange the themes.

Step 5 - Defining themes: Braun and Clarke (2006: 92) explain this step as the process of finding the core of what the different themes are actually about. The researcher should consider what the themes are saying and how they relate to each other. Maguire and Delahunt (2017: 3351) suggest the use of a thematic map to review and define all the themes.

Step 6 - Write up: The endpoint is to summarise the findings in a report to answer the research questions as identified in the theoretical framework that informs the study.

4.11 Ethical considerations

The researcher applied for approval from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology Faculty of Business Ethics Committee, and received full approval before the fieldwork commenced. Howitt and Cramer (2020: 167) explain that participants in a research study must be formally informed and be made aware that they are taking part in a study. The participants have to give their consent. The participants must be aware of what will be expected of them, how the results of the study will be used and how their identity will be protected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 153). The researcher of this study received informed consent from all the participants before they were interviewed. Each participant was emailed a letter of introduction, explaining the research and what to expect during the interview (see Appendix D). The interview questions were also emailed to the participants in advance so that they could preview the questions.

Creswell and Creswell (2018: 153) remind researchers of the importance of confidentiality and privacy. The researcher therefore undertook to never record the names of the participants throughout the study. Confidentiality is when the researcher assures the participants that the information they provide will remain known to the researcher only, even though the responses they provide could match the identity of the participant (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014: 266). In this study, the researcher numbered each participant and kept a confidential list of their identities.

4.12 Summary

The research approach in this study was qualitative. A combination of an inductive approach and case study was used, as a sample of participants from the food truck industry was selected to take part in semi-structured interviews. The choice of sampling method was based on the objective of the research study and therefore the purposive sampling method was employed. In this chapter the data collection, the interview process and data analysis were also discussed. The four criteria of trustworthiness were reviewed and a brief overview of ethical considerations was also presented.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the factors influencing the sustainability of NMB food truck entrepreneurs, as experienced by the seven participants, are discussed. Both the external and internal factors were reviewed in detail with support from quotes and explanations from the participants that took part in the study. Each factor is listed and explained in an attempt to achieve the aim and objective of this study.

5.2 External factors

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the factors that influenced the sustainability of food truck entrepreneurs in NMB. The secondary objectives include the motivations for starting a food truck business, future plans, reviewing the challenges faced by these businesses and an evaluation of the policies and regulations.

DiPietro (2016: 1220) conducted research showcasing the primary areas that have been covered in previous studies related to the restaurant and food service industry. The areas found by DiPietro include operations, marketing, and quality of service, finance, innovation and hygiene. It is also important to review the motivations for starting a food truck business. The various points mentioned above form the conceptual framework for this study with the majority of the factors found by Truong and the primary areas listed by DiPietro being the main variables. The variables include entrepreneurial skills, marketing (social, environmental and economic), short-term and long-term business plans, policy and regulations, and awareness of the industry and finances.

Reviewing the aspects that have been found in previous research, the key assumption is that both internal and external factors contribute towards a sustainable food truck business. The external factors cannot be controlled by the food truck entrepreneur and include aspects such as government policy and city regulations (McGinnis, 2012: 34) as well as the market (Truong, 2019: 62). In the following section, each external factor is explained in relation to the study with reference to specific data collected during the interviews with the food truck participants.

5.2.1 Awareness

It has been mentioned before that the modern-day food truck industry evolved in America around 2009 when the food truck businesses introduced more diverse food items (Hawk 2013: 17). Hawk

(2013: 18) believes that the turning point for the traditional food truck was during the recession of 2008 when established restaurant owners were forced to turn to alternative options for customers who no longer had the finances to afford expensive dining practices. In South Africa, the food truck industry is about 10 years old. Govender-Ypma (2014: 1) describes it as an industry with “slow but gradual growth”. One of the external factors that were explored in this study includes the awareness of the industry and becoming aware of a food truck business.

Two participants mentioned that they had seen and experienced the success of the food truck industry in the United States of America, while travelling and working abroad. Three of the participants reported that they noticed the food truck trends in Cape Town and thought it to be a good business to own in Nelson Mandela Bay. One of the participants commented as follows: “I noticed that it was quite popular in Cape Town and I was under the impression it will also pick up here in PE, but it has been slow. It has grown and improved, but nothing like Cape Town yet” (Participant 2). This may mean that food truck business start-ups can be different according to context.

In probing further, another participant followed the example of a family member who started a food truck business a couple of years ago and noticed the success of the businesses before starting his own. This may mean that food truck businesses also provide opportunities for skills development for start-up entrepreneurs. Another participant noticed the gap in NMB a few years ago and created the food truck trend in the metro as mentioned in the following statement:

“We pretty much developed it for the city. We saw the gap and thought let's try and create something. Let's make food trucking for the mobile food business more credible and more professional. So we started our own food truck event because we could control all those factors.” (Participant 1)

The awareness of food trucks was therefore evident and generally popular as the reason for business start-up. Food trucking was not a business that was unknown or new to the context of South Africa or NMB, although one participant alluded to the fact that they started the trend in the metro. All other participants became aware of the food truck industry through sources outside of the metro.

The participants were also asked what they believed the current opportunities were for food truck businesses in NMB. All of the participants mentioned the number of markets that were operating again after the pandemic and the return of festivals. Other participants mentioned sports events, weddings, corporate events, interschool events and private parties. All the events created opportunities for food truck businesses as indicated in the following statement:

“It is a growing industry in our community (NMB area), there is a lot of support and demand for it. There are constant markets being run each weekend. Big corporates are increasingly using food trucks. Many personal requests, in the form of weddings and birthday parties have requested the services of food trucks” (Participant 4).

This was a good indication that the food trucks that were currently operating in NMB had more business opportunities.

However, not all participants perceived that food truck businesses had more opportunities as noted in the response of one participant: “there is very little opportunities for people that is just starting in the industry. Now that we are known in the food truck industry, we can do many markets. We are always booked. There are a lot of markets at the moment and food trucks draw people to markets” (Participant 6). This comment implied that although markets are plentiful in the metro, it is not always possible for new food truck entrepreneurs to enter the market and start doing business. They had to build business relations with their customers and with the event or market organisers.

Another entrepreneur commented: “The food truck name has got to be established and known to people in order to operate. We got involved with the bigger trucker event that use to be on Friday nights before COVID. There used to be around 2000 to 3000 people that attended those events. People could then see your product and see the quality of food you offer” (Participant 3). This meant that the more events the food truck business participated in, the better the opportunities to be known by customers and create long-lasting business relationships.

One of the secondary research questions in this study was to establish the motivations for entrepreneurs starting a food truck business in NMB. Most of the respondents had more than one motivating factor for starting a food truck business. The examples were being motivated by people who enjoyed the food on offer and wanted to know where they could purchase more, as well as being encouraged by family and friends to start a business in the food truck industry. It was interesting to note that the common theme for five of the participants was that they transitioned from either having an established food outlet or catering business to a food truck business. Three of the five respondents mentioned the fact that because the food truck is mobile it was an added advantage, and this assisted with the visibility of their brand. Only one of the five respondents had to sell his existing hospitality business due to the pandemic and decided to start the food truck business instead. One other respondent bought an already existing food truck business as he was retrenched and was attracted by the lucrative opportunity of a food truck business. Another participant took the advice of family and friends to start a food truck and get out of a corporate environment. Table 2 summarises the examples of themes on the motivation of the business owners.

Table 2: Summary of themes on motivation of food truck entrepreneurs

Theme	Description	Example of statement
Transition	Changing from restaurant to food truck business	<p>“We got invited to a few markets and festivals around the city and province after we closed our restaurant, and that’s kind of how we got into the food truck businesses.” (Participant 1)</p> <p>“We had to sell the pub and it was my choice to close and start the food truck.” (Participant 7)</p>
Brand visibility	Being a mobile business and visible at various events.	<p>“People got to know us from Sunday markets and we got invited to do smaller events for people at sport clubs and corporates.” (Participant 3)</p>
New business model	Developing the catering business into a food truck business.	<p>“Being mobile is definitely a benefit. In my area there is a street with many factories who have started supporting me and buying my food and that is how I grew and decided to get a food trailer.” (Participant 5)</p> <p>People who supported us advised us to go this route as opposed to getting a fixed building with rent attached to it. (Participant 4)</p>
New opportunities	Starting a new career in the food truck industry.	<p>“It was an opportunity and I had nothing else to do at that point. You have a fixed shop, regardless what happens, it is yours.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“I noticed that people enjoyed my food.” (Participant 6)</p>

The motivations for starting a food truck business therefore vary among all the participants, although there are many similarities to the motivations that have been mentioned in previous studies. The benefit of the food truck being mobile is one of the biggest motivations mentioned in almost all of the food truck research conducted before, as opposed to a restaurant that was operating in a fixed or single location without options to operate in other areas at a lower cost.

5.2.2 Regulations

Several studies have linked the benefits of food trucks in a city and the impact they have on the overall social, cultural and economic environments. Kucic (2013: 52) highlights the importance of municipal regulations to reflect and support food truck businesses. The municipal regulations must not restrict

the cultural purpose of street vending in a community. The specific legal and hygiene requirements that food trucks in NMB must adhere to were having a certificate of acceptance, a hawker’s license and a certificate of compliance. Lately, a food handling certificate was added to the requirements for all NMB food truck owners and their employees. The following statement highlights the requirements of the food truck business:

“Every truck must have what they call a certificate of acceptance, a COA. You now also have to undergo a food handling course at the cost of R2 000 per delegate. No food trucker can afford that, especially if you have two or three employees. The health inspector must inform the applicants about this. They are actually doing the training now to achieve this new certification. Now at least we work side by side regarding the safety of the vehicles. The two certificates that are required are the COA and the hawker’s license. The bigger markets will ask for a certificate of compliance, a COC on your electrical and on your gas” (Participant 1).

As indicated in the statement, an additional requirement was related to the safety of the equipment of the food truck. All the participants mentioned the two main certificates that are required to operate at markets in NMB as well as the hawker’s license. The food handling certificate seemed to have been something new that has been implemented recently and not all participants were in favour of the requirements. One of the reasons for the discontent with the requirement of the food handling certificate was the high cost of training. Table 3 summarises the themes related to regulations.

Table 3: Summary of themes related to regulations

Theme	Description	Example of statement
Cost	Extra cost to the business to undergo training in food handling	“The food safety course I feel is unreasonable. This will kill the industry if they require all food truck owners and staff to get this certification. It is an extra cost that we have to carry.” (Participant 6)
Industry knowledge	Not all business owners necessarily understand the health requirements	“I feel it is reasonable, especially for people who did not study within this industry and might not have all the required knowledge about cooking food for the public and large amounts.” (Participant 5)
Hygiene	Food handling and hygiene requirements	“We all must undergo training for basic principles of food handling and hygiene.” (Participant 4) “Contaminated food has a huge risk and that is why there is a Health Department

Theme	Description	Example of statement
		to make sure that these things do not happen.” (Participant 1)
Trading zones	Trading at different locations	“We can basically trade anywhere we want, but not on the beachfront!” (Participant 6)
Inspections	Health inspectors’ visits	“The health inspectors do come and inspect your vehicles. Bigger events and markets you get officials who inspect the fire extinguisher and gas certificates.” Participant 4

Food handling was one of the important factors in the food truck business. The participants were then asked how the bylaws in NMB affect their businesses. Two participants perceived that the bylaws did not affect their business, five perceived that bylaws negatively affected their business and Figure 2 illustrates the outcome. Interestingly, no participant perceived that bylaws had a positive impact on the business.

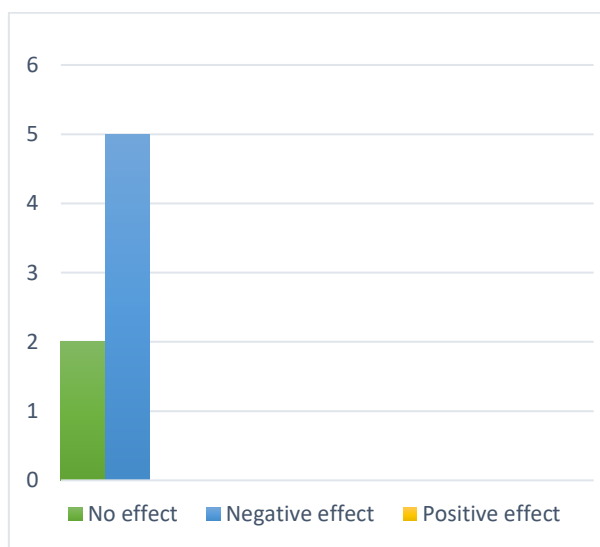


Figure 2: Summary of perceptions on bylaws

Some of the distinct features of food truck businesses were being mobile (e.g. trading at different locations) and participating in different events. A common theme amongst the participants related to regulations of business locations where a food truck was able to trade. Five participants mentioned that the regulations related to trading locations affected their businesses negatively. All the participants mentioned the fact that no trading was allowed for food trucks on the beachfront. This was an ideal location because it was one of the centres for tourist activities and could allow access to more customers. One participant highlighted the extent of the effect of the bylaws in NMB relating to trading location affecting his food truck business:

“Huge, because there's no clarity on that. No one knows where they are allowed to trade and where not. So you basically trade and then when you get told not to trade there, then you move on” (Participant 1).

Similarly, another participant criticised limitations of access to trading locations with more customers. The participant also perceived that the limited access was negatively affecting their business growth and creating job opportunities as noted in the following statement:

“To park at the beachfront is not allowed. We feel that we are part of the tourist attractions on the beach, but we are not allowed to park there. If you park there you get fined. People want to go for a walk on the beachfront and have a bite to eat or a cool drink, they are forced to go sit in a restaurant, whereas they could have just grabbed something from one of the food trucks and enjoy the outdoors, but it is not allowed. Having a food truck and being able to create jobs for others is hampered by regulations like this, as we could have expanded our truck by now, should we have been allowed to park at the beachfront” (Participant 7).

The consequence of trading at an unauthorised location was a fine, which could also affect the profits of the businesses. Overall, there were strong perceptions among the food truck business owners related to trading locations, especially the beachfront in NMB being off-limits for food truck entrepreneurs, as highlighted in the following statement:

“Bylaws limit us to where the people are, as summertime people are all on the beach” (Participant 2).

“You cannot think that you will be able to do it here like the Cape Town way of where people can just drive out and get you en route to Hout Bay for a quick meal. It's a whole different market here in PE and the beachfront is the golden mile but you will not get permission to just park there and trade” (Participant 3).

Not being able to trade at popular destinations like the beachfront will have a negative impact on food truck businesses. Although the participants mentioned that they could basically trade anywhere in the metro, except for the beachfront it is also important to take into account that not all residents and neighbourhoods would accept food trucks trading in their area. One participant commented that:

“It also depends on where you are, as some areas like the Northern areas (within NMB), if you park in the residential area there I am sure you will get a lot of support from the people there. Here you will get people phoning and complaining that there is a food truck parked in the street and the officials will ask you to move, as they have to regulate it otherwise it becomes a free for all.” (Participant 5)

The regulations in NMB seemed to be challenging, to some extent, for the food truck entrepreneurs, especially the extra cost mentioned by some of the participants to undergo the food handling course and the restrictions around trading at the beachfront. The trading zones should be revisited by the City Council to allow more freedom for trading at popular destinations like the beachfront, to allow

more opportunities for food truck entrepreneurs. Strict control must still be implemented but there should not be any reason for no food trucks to be allowed to trade at the NMB beachfront.

Health inspectors' visits seemed to happen at random. Two participants mentioned that they had only been visited by a health inspector once, outside of big festivals and markets. Health inspectors seem to target festivals to do their inspections of the food trucks and as one participant put it:

“At the festivals the inspectors are a pain. They want to inspect your truck and talk to you while you have 30 people in a queue waiting to order food” (Participant 7).

Participant 5 mentioned that food truck owners have to show that they have a contract in place with a company that treats their food truck for rodents on a regular basis. None of the other participants mentioned something similar, and it could be that this was something new as the participant who mentioned this had just recently registered the food truck. It could also be that the specific regulation was not clear and was not implemented by all health inspectors.

5.2.3 Markets / marketing

The external marketing factors include social (the people), environmental (the planet) and economic (financial) forces. McGinnis (2012: 45) explained the theory of the three forces as the triple bottom line for food truck businesses in order to strengthen their brand, and ultimately attract more customers to make more profit and become financially sustainable. This becomes increasingly difficult as more food truck businesses emerge and the market becomes more competitive.

Every participant mentioned that they used social media as the main marketing tool for their businesses. In most cases, the participants seem to use both Facebook and Instagram with no one mentioning Twitter as an advertising medium. Word of mouth and being visible on the streets and at markets were mentioned by nearly all participants as an extremely important marketing strategy.

Participant 7 made the following comment: “Facebook and being out and about on the streets. People see us parked here every day whenever the weather is good.”

Myrick (2018: 1) also highlighted the importance of social media as a means of keeping loyal customers up to date with the food truck menu and of creating awareness among possible new customers. Interestingly, in the study conducted by Myrick (2018: 1) offline marketing was rated as just as important and, in some cases, better than online marketing due to the visibility and physical appearance of a food truck. Being seen out on the streets and having a brightly coloured food truck with an attractive exterior and a presentable menu is a dynamic way to market the business. Kraus, Sen, Savitskie, Kumar and Brooks (2022: 175) has found similar results and include the importance of word of mouth as well as the image of the food truck.

Participants explained diverse points on their understanding of the state of the market in NMB. The views include the perceptions that the market was small, slow in growth and promotion of a brand, and products offered. One participant noted that the food truck business market was small in NMB because of low support from the business environment. Participant 1 seem to understand this concept well, as explained in one of his comments: “Port Elizabeth is a difficult place to do business. It has a small market. You have to rely a lot on local support and repeat business. It is crucial to be successful.”

Another participant also mentioned that despite having a food truck business in NMB, business growth was slow compared to other cities in the country. Participant 2 also commented on the market in NMB: “The PE market has been slow. It has grown and improved, but nothing like Cape Town yet.” Participant 3 touched on the difference in the South African market versus the American food truck market.

“Marketing is very important. People must get to know your brand. It’s different to America where guys just post a twitter feed and say we are here parked at this street or avenue come out and get a meal” (Participant 3).

The price point of menu items also becomes important, because if the market in NMB is different, it also means that the finances and the economics of the city are different. More about this will be discussed within the internal factors affecting a food truck entrepreneur, but the comment made below by one of the participants is fitting here:

“We've got a menu that has price points for everyone, so you can get something for R20 and then you can go right up to 90 bucks” (Participant 1).

Below is a diagram of the target markets that the food truck entrepreneurs who took part in this study believed they had.

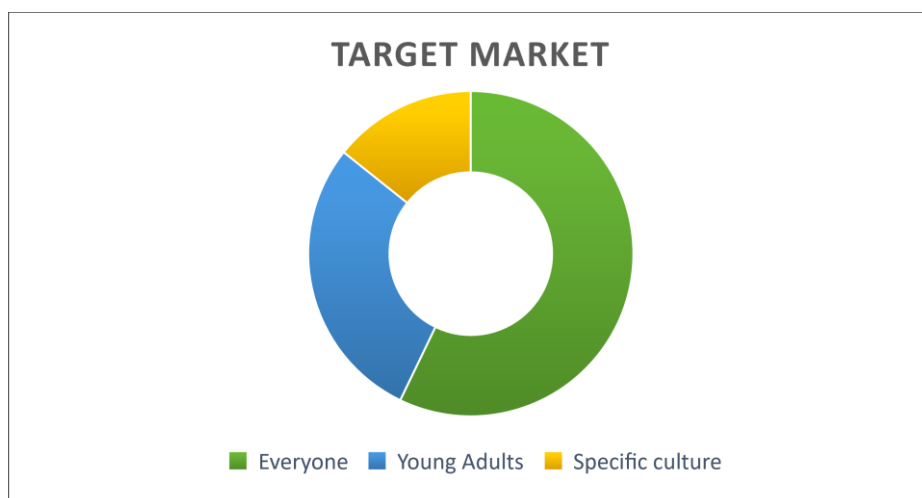


Figure 3: Summary of target markets of food entrepreneurs

Four of the seven participants said that everyone was their target market, with only two participants specifically mentioning young adults, and Participant 6 mentioning a specific culture as her target market.

Truong (2019: 50), highlights the importance of market research and understanding the market in which the business operates. A food truck business has to do market research in order to understand the customers' needs and determine the trends, menu pricing and competitors. Not understanding the market could lead to the failure of the food truck business (Truong, 2019: 50).

Related to the target market, the participants were asked to respond on what they believe made their food truck unique and innovative. Figure 4 below illustrates the analysis of the responses from the participants.



Figure 4: Summary of responses related to the uniqueness of the business

In probing further, participants mentioned the uniqueness of their business in relation to the type of food they offered (menu). As one participant mentioned, "Our product is unique. We are a dessert truck. We consider ourselves as a bit more premium. Our menu items are expensive as we make our products and ice cream ourselves. It is a bit more up-market" (Participant 2). Another point was the quality of food as noted by one participant: "Our menu is unique and something that no other food truck offers in town" (Participant 4). Similarly, another participant ascribed it to "Maintaining my quality of food and flavours" (Participant 6). The name of the food truck business was also important in the uniqueness of the business: "Our food truck name. People are inquisitive and want to see what we serve. We change our menu often and we offer what our clients ask [for]" (Participant 7).

Reviewing the responses from the participants it is clear that they all understand the importance of an attractive menu and knowing who their competitors are, as many of them mentioned unique food items or speciality products that they offered. This ties in with the theory of Truong (2019: 50)

regarding the importance of understanding the needs of the customers and knowing the target market.

5.3 Internal factors

Internal factors can be controlled by the entrepreneur and include a good business strategy for growth and maturity (Myrick, 2012: 19) as well as financing, and good entrepreneurial and operational skills (Truong, 2019: 62). These factors are believed to all contribute towards a sustainable food truck business and form part of the data collection conducted in this study. The following section will outline the internal factors mentioned, together with explanations and responses from the participants.

5.3.1 Skills

During the data collection of this study, an attempt was made to understand the skills and background of each participant. The table below indicates a summary of the findings. Only two of the participants had a background in the hospitality industry, with the rest of the participants all having had different careers, but with a number of years of experience in the food industry. This indicates that all of the entrepreneurs had some skills and experience with food, although they might not have studied or worked in the hospitality industry.

Table 4: Summary of profile of the food truck entrepreneurs

Entrepreneur ID	Career background	Number of years involved in the food industry
Participant 1	Corporate industry	16 years
Participant 2	Oil rig industry	6 years
Participant 3	Financial industry	7 years
Participant 4	Logistics and transport	2 years
Participant 5	Hospitality and catering	4 years
Participant 6	Nursing and hospital management	3 ½ years
Participant 7	Hotel management	45 years

The participants were asked about the skills that they had developed since managing their own food truck business. The lists below are a summary of the feedback from the participants. The data has been grouped into four broad categories:

Skills related to management:

- The ability to adapt and to react to changes in the environment.

- Management skills.
- Resourcefulness, being creative and innovative.
- Time management.
- Patience and confidence.
- Coping with pressure.

Skills related to human resources and people:

- Working with people.
- Understanding the Employment Act in terms of employing staff.
- Managing people.
- Management of staff.
- Working with different customers.

Skills related to finance:

- How to run a business and be profitable.
- How to work with finances, the budget, cash flow and planning.
- Costing

Skills related to the food industry:

- Basic hygiene in food preparation.
- How to cook in a small space.

Owning a food truck was not different to owning any other business, and it required the entrepreneur to have skills in finances, human resources, marketing, operations, management, hygiene and safety as well as food preparation and cooking skills (Truong, 2019: 60). A number of participants in this study were adamant that the entrepreneur had to adapt and be versatile in the food truck industry, or they would not survive. Participants 1, 3, 6 and 7 all mentioned the effect of the weather at an outside market. If the weather was bad, then attendance at the outdoor market would be low, with a risk of ending up with fresh produce and stock that could not be sold. As an entrepreneur, one would have to devise alternative plans on how to get rid of all the extra food and still make a profit.

Five of the food truck entrepreneurs also employed other staff, and were asked about the skills that their staff contributed to the businesses. However, when the data was reviewed for this question, it turned out that only one participant actually mentioned a skill that the staff member she employed added to her business: one member of staff had strong sales and marketing skills that were hugely

beneficial. All the other participants mentioned skills they require their staff to have as appose to an added skill that the staff member bring to the business. The comments include the following:

- Flexibility and ability to do all required tasks
- Social skills and the knowledge to deal with customers
- Clear minded, hardworking people
- Taking orders and working with payments

This could ultimately indicate that most of the participants felt they had adequate skills to operate the businesses on their own and only require a few extra hands to do the day-to-day selling and cooking of meals. All seven participants who took part in this study were actively involved in their own food trucks and three mentioned that they only employed extra staff during busy periods like markets and festivals. Only Participants 1 and 7 had permanent staff working for them.

5.3.2 Plans / business strategy

It was found in previous studies that having a business plan in place is extremely important for the growth and expansion of a food truck business. Myrick (2018: 1) goes as far as stating that not having a business plan in place could mean the end of a food truck business. A business plan must be used as a road map for the future and should include a marketing strategy, management structure, financial planning and a competitive analysis (Myrick, 2018: 1).

Interestingly enough, only two participants in this study confirmed that they had a formal business strategy in place for their food trucks.

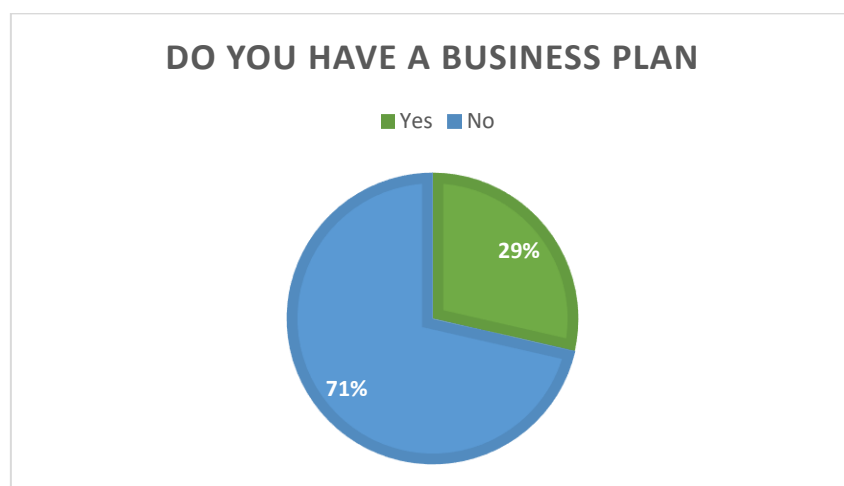


Figure 5: Summary of responses related to having a business plan

Each participant identified different factors to be mindful of for a successful food truck business, although there are many similarities amongst the collected data. The main factors that were mentioned more than once are listed below:

- Customer relationships
- Good branding
- Consistent product offering
- Attractive menu offerings
- Being flexible
- Cash flow management
- Good and clean equipment

Participant 2 had the following to add: “You got to be able to go where needed, work long hours and you got to be able to deal with people.” The other examples mentioned by the participants include the below comment from Participant 3:

“Your branding has to be eye-catching. Your truck has to be clean, both inside and outside. Remember that your customers can see everything and you will notice their eyes looking at the counter tops and equipment in the food truck. Your product is very important and the quality, freshness and presentation of your food has got to be excellent.”

The statement ties in with the listed factors above, namely good branding, menu offerings and clean equipment.

Participant 6 had an interesting comment around the menu offering and costing: “You have to do your costing. We had to also adapt to a low cost menu option, as it seems that with every market a new food truck would arrive so we have to stay on top of our game. I cost everything, if we go out of town we look at all the costs involved and see if it will be viable for us to attend that market.”

This implies that the food truck industry is currently rather competitive, and keeping an eye on costing and menu prices is necessary to ensure keeping a business strong and profitable. To remain successful, the food truck operators have to ensure their products are of high quality, something that their customers would enjoy, that is delicious and consistent, but also not overpriced. Other comments made by the participants regarding success of the food truck business included good social media communication, dedicated staff and reliable suppliers.

Participants were also asked what they believed the main trends currently were within the food truck industry. Figure 6 below shows the three main points that the majority of the participants listed as current trends.

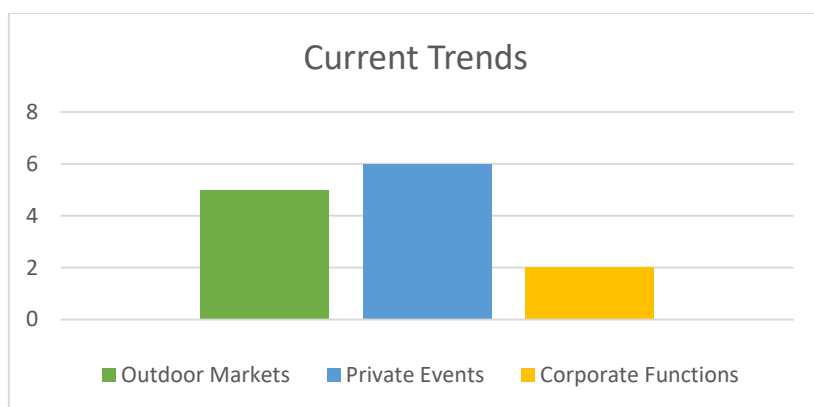


Figure 6: Summary of trends on food truck business activities

It is evident that outdoor markets are currently a major trend that is well supported by locals. Outdoor markets are usually offered in parks or open spaces where food stalls, food truck produce, fresh produce and crafts are for sale. Visiting farmers' markets is one of South Africans' favourite activities and is an enjoyable way to experience the fresh air and outdoors (Flavour Online, 2021: 1). The outdoor markets are believed to be very popular and the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have had an impact on people's perception of shopping malls and indoor space, as mentioned in the comments by the participants below. Naicker and Rogerson (2017: 3) found that food events, specifically farmers' markets, are one of the most sustainable forms of tourism, mainly due to their low environmental impact associated with production and consumption. The statements quoted below provide more in-depth explanations and further trends, as explained by some of the participants.

"There are lots of pop-up markets. People want to support local. They're treating the markets now as almost like an outdoor shopping mall. People go shopping at this outdoor shopping mall, cause they don't want to shop indoor spaces anymore" (Participant 1).

Another participant mentioned the effect of outdoor markets and shopping malls:

"Markets are huge at the moment. People are shopping local and they do not go to malls as much anymore. People are very supportive of local products. Going to a market is a family experience. People enjoy a day out in the fresh air rather than going to a mall. We do a lot of wine festivals, golf days, farmer markets and agricultural events" (Participant 6).

Participant 4 said the following that supports the trend of markets: "Local and homemade or hand made is very trendy at the moment. Food trucks are the main reason why there are these huge markets popping up each weekend – people love going out to a beautiful location, listening to live music and having enormous choice of street food. Businesses are increasingly using food trucks to bring catering to their corporate functions. And event organizers are finding that instead of doing their own catering and laying out cash, they can get food trucks to cater." Further to these trends, it has

also been mentioned that the presentation of food items and offerings needs to stand out and be different:

“Being hip and presenting your food in a special way and not just the norm. You have to offer something different to stand out. Events are coming back now again after COVID so you have to be trendy and offer food that people want to eat.” (Participant 3).

Participant 7 mentioned the following that ties in with the above comment regarding food offerings: “The trend is themed cuisine and so many new food trucks have started out now, with specialising in specific menu items. We have recently done a kids party and had to make 60 little food items on our menu for the kids to come ‘buy’ from our food truck. The kids loved it!”

Outdoor markets, private events and corporate functions seemed to be the most common trends currently. As participant 3 mentioned, more and more events are returning now after the COVID-19 pandemic and some participants mentioned that they are currently booked for markets nearly every weekend for the rest of the year. It is also interesting to note that three participants mentioned the support of local businesses. Food trucks are known for creating a vibrant atmosphere and participant 4 explained the perfect situation for current markets around NMB: outside, at a beautiful location with live music and good food. Participant 6 also mentioned the outdoors and fresh air, but more importantly, the family experience that people enjoy while visiting local markets. Participant 6 also added that most of the markets have entertainment for children, which is very important for attracting families.

Naicker and Rogerson (2017: 15) also imply that visiting a local market makes shopping for tourists and locals a pleasure rather than a chore. The markets are viewed as a “community hub” where family and friends meet to experience culinary diversity, culture and enjoyment amid the hustle and bustle of city life (Naicker & Rogerson, 2017: 15). Eldridge’s (2015: 89) finding is also relevant here in that festivals, private events and sports gatherings with food trucks present play an important role within the social environment of a community.

Reviewing the trends as mentioned by the participants, it is clear that currently a lot is happening for food truck business in NMB and the entrepreneurs are all involved in many markets, events and functions. This is a good indication of strong business opportunities for food truck entrepreneurs.

5.3.3 Financial resources

Financing is important in any business and Philips (2012: 132) states that both the start-up cost and operating capital are vital to a food truck business in order to understand how much money is needed.

Thereafter the entrepreneur has to determine the break-even point and review daily expenses and sales, create an income statement and manage the cash flow (Philips, 2012, 133). In this study, all participants were asked what the key financial sources were for financing their food truck business.

Three participants mentioned that they used their pension funds as capital to start their businesses. One participant sold his business and bought the food truck and another participant used her savings from working overseas and also applied for a grant from the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) for her start-up cost and capital.

Participant 6 said the following: "You have to fund your own food truck. There is very little support from the government for any funding. You either have to get a bank loan or use your personal savings. I had to use my pension fund to get our trailer."

Participant 1 raised an interesting point: "A food truck business is self-funding, because the profits are quite high and if you manage it properly, there's money to be made, then there's fat, because your barriers to enter are quite low. You got to start small and you have to put money aside for the not so busy months."

It is known that a food truck business has a much lower start-up cost than a restaurant, and Participant 1 also alluded to low barriers for entering the food truck industry; however, for a business to be self-funding, one still has to ensure sufficient start-up capital. Participant 6 mentioned that there was little support in the form of government funding, although at least one participant in this study received funding, as mentioned by Participant 5:

"I used my savings and received a grant from the NYDA, a grant of R50 000 for assistance to small businesses for young entrepreneurs. I had to also take out a small loan, as I wanted my food truck a very specific way."

Financing a business does, however, remain a challenge, and the participants mentioned a number of challenges they face in financing their food trucks. Four of the participants mentioned the struggle to build and grow their savings. Participant 4 said the following: "At the moment we live month to month and use our profits for general expenses. We have not really been able to put money aside to grow and develop the business yet." Another participant explained the challenges related to costs. Participant 1 said: "A proper food truck is quite expensive; it's basically a mobile kitchen and the cost of equipment is expensive. Unless you got an investor or you have cash, you have to work slowly in getting your food truck the way it works for you. It can take up to two years to get your truck the way you want it."

This explains why Participant 4 was not able to save money yet, as his business was only established in 2021 and was therefore not two years old yet. He was still modifying and developing his food truck to work most effectively for his business. The same was the case with Participant 5, who started her business earlier in 2022. If it had not been for the NYDA grant that she had received, she would not have been able to design her food truck to the specifications she desired. "I had to get my truck kitted out in Johannesburg as there is no company in PE who can do it. I wanted to have it a specific way with gas, two serving hatches, a fridge, two fryers and the trailer had to be wrapped in colorful branding." Participant 5 also added the following, "Inconsistency of cash flow and setting the budget is a huge financial challenge for me."

Participant 7 also mentioned the expense of having the food truck design printed and wrapped onto the truck. They too had to send their food truck to Johannesburg to be branded and also had solar panels installed so that it could operate without the need for power points and electricity.

Other financial challenges mentioned by the participants include travelling to markets that are out of town as well as the lockdown period during the pandemic when no events took place and food trucks could not move around.

Participant 1 said, "Travelling for out-of-town markets is a challenge, petrol and paying for accommodation. Time is another challenge. The time taken to prepare the vehicle to travel and the time it takes to dismantle and clean the vehicle when it comes back, those things that don't generate income."

Participant 6 said, "Surviving when there are no markets. Having to come up with ideas when there were no markets and we could not sell food from our truck."

Entrepreneurs had to be creative during the pandemic to keep their food truck businesses going. A few participants mentioned that they knew of food trucks that closed their doors during the pandemic, as they had no income for months. Participant 7 had to sell his business, but in his case, he scaled down to a food truck instead:

"We had the pub and grill for eight years, but had to sell it during COVID as we could not carry on after lockdown. We put the pub in the market. We started with the truck and did about 5 private functions to start off with and since then we have been in attendance at most of the markets."

That takes us to the next point of how a food truck business is able to overcome financial challenges.

"You have to pick your events, ask around and find out if the event has been on before. How many people are doing this event that is the same as you? If for example there is already a coffee guy at the event, why would they need another? Plan for your units you want to sell at

that specific event. This is a numbers game and you have to add to the bottom line. You have to compare prices with your suppliers and work out what the costs are” (Participant 3).

Participant 1 said the following: “Remember, in this industry, there's no hard and fast rules. You have up months and down months. So you need to put money aside for the down months. Then also working pretty much every day. We don't change our menu too often, we revise it, but we don't change the menu too often, so our ingredients can roll over.”

Cutting back on the number of meals available on the menu or changing to less expensive menu items seems to be one way that food truck businesses manage to overcome financial challenges. A few of the participants mentioned their menus and alternative options as a way to overcome financial challenges. Participant 2 for example said that they opted to sell some of their menu items as frozen options that people could buy and heat at home. Participant 5 mentioned the following related to menus: “I have two menus. The daily sales I have is for kids in my area who come home from school and buying small meals like fried chips. I then have a bigger menu for functions and events.”

Managing the stock levels and ingredients is another vital point for managing the finances. Participant 1 mentioned in the above comment that keeping the menu standard and not changing it too often also assists in standardizing the ingredients, and they can be rolled over to the next day. Participant 5 said the following:

“I keep strict record of my sales and expenses to see the trends within a month. I then start seeing a trend that the first two weeks of the month is good but then the third week is slow. You get to understand when to have more stock available and when not.”

It is therefore a good indication of how important planning is so that there is minimal waste. Participant 6 made the following valuable point: “I only buy what I need when I need it. Costing is very important! I don't keep stock and only buy fresh.”

Overcoming financial challenges becomes very tricky when the business is the only income for the owner or family. In many cases, the owner might be forced to sell the food truck, especially during times like the pandemic when there were no markets or events. Participant 3 mentioned the following:

“Us personally during the COVID period were lucky that I had my own business and the food trailers were not our sole income. If the food truck was our only income, then we would have been in trouble. Many guys sold their trucks during the COVID period and could not keep their business going. In the food industry people got creative and still offered meals to personal homes within their neighborhood. People still needed to eat. We did Friday nights take away nights in our neighborhood and dropped meals off at people's homes.”

Participant 6 also used her social media page to promote home-cooked meals during the pandemic and she promoted her spices in ready-to-use parcels for her customers. As mentioned previously, many entrepreneurs were forced to be creative in their offerings, and it seems that those who were successful in their ideas stayed in business, as mentioned by Participant 3 above. In this case, the fact that the food truck business was not their only income was definitely a major factor in their survival and remaining financially strong. Sadly, some food truck entrepreneurs did not survive the COVID-19 pandemic and had to sell their businesses.

5.4 Sustainable food truck business

Reviewing the factors discussed in this study, it is evident that a number of these factors are most important for a food truck business to remain sustainable and profitable. Some factors are definitely more important than others, and some factors are under the control of the food truck entrepreneur while others are not. It has already been established that both internal and external factors play an important role in the success of a food truck business.

Having the required skills to survive and adapt to this industry was important, as mentioned by nearly every participant in the study. Both management and financial skills were vital for food truck entrepreneurs to survive and be profitable. Having management skills supported entrepreneurs to make quick decisions, plan ahead and cope with pressure. Understanding and managing the finances of the business was another skill that had emerged as a theme in this study. It was important to budget, cost and forecast. Managing the cash flow and ensuring that the business attempted to build savings was important, as every business would experience favourable months (e.g. increase in revenue) and unfavourable months (e.g. decline in revenue). One participant summed it up: “This industry was very brutal and honest as things can go very well and the business can flourish, but things can go very wrong quite quickly and the businesses can lose money fast” (Participant 1).

Having a formal business plan in place for both the long and short term has been identified in the literature as extremely important for the survival of a food truck business. In this study, the participants did not deem a formal business plan important. Most participants just had an informal business plan with basic short-term planning. In most cases, this seemed to be due to previous experience of the owners and the industries that they had worked in before starting a food truck business. It could also be due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic that had changed the perceptions and long-term outlook of many businesses. Some of the participants in this study indicated that their main focus was to attend every market and festival possible, while others selected specific markets that would add value to their brand. Participants seem to be aware of their competitors, as in most of the responses it was mentioned that the menus of the various food trucks were unique and personal to

the owners. It was however also mentioned by at least two participants that they noticed the increase of new food trucks that arrived on the scene regularly. Therefore, a business plan might not be that important at present, but as the industry grows in NMB, it might be increasingly important for food truck owners to implement a formal business plan.

Another theme that emerged from the study was the importance of ensuring the visibility of food truck brands known to the locals. The use of social media to update and attract customers was undoubtedly a factor that ensured the visibility of a brand. Social media in particular was one of the ways that many food trucks survived during COVID-19, by posting home-cooked meals and takeaway options for their customers. All participants mentioned that they used social media to attract more customers and advertise their offerings. As noted above, one of the participants commented about the current trends of outdoor markets around NMB and the use of social media to attract people. When each food truck posted about its participation at a specific market, it reached thousands of customers and benefitted everyone at the market as it increased customer attendance.

In most cases, the participants had a very broad target market with no details or specifics as to who the target market actually was. The food truck industry in NMB does not seem to be too competitive currently as each participant believed that they served a specific market that enjoyed their food and menu options. It has, however, been mentioned already that NMB is a difficult place to do business in and that the market is relatively small in the metro. Entrepreneurs had to therefore rely on local support. The fact that outdoor markets are currently a trend in NMB is beneficial to all food truck entrepreneurs in the metro. However, it has been mentioned by two participants that the food truck industry is still relatively closed, and a new food truck will struggle to enter regular outdoor markets. Major festivals and big sport events in the metro also remain relatively closed and were costly for small and new food truck owners to gain access.

The regulations in NMB do not seem to contribute to the success of food truck entrepreneurs in the metro, mainly due to the restrictions around trading at the beachfront. This seems to be the only reason why participants of this study indicated that the regulations have a negative effect on their business. The certification requirements to trade and the health and safety requirements for food trucks are supported and understood by all. Health inspectors seem to conduct inspections only at festivals to ensure the relevant licenses and certifications were in place. It was also determined that the food handlers' certificate that was required by all employees on a food truck could be obtained online and was offered free of charge.

Participants in this study also shared their future plans and how they foresaw sustainable and growing businesses. Nearly every participant would like to expand their business by creating more options on

their menus or start another food truck business. In most cases, the owners indicated that they wanted to continue to create awareness of their brand by supporting local events and outdoor markets. One of the participants summed it up as follows:

“Food trucking is a very personal independent business, but together, at a market, we create a vibe and good food options. There is power in working together. We still operate competitively with each other within the market, but together we are creating an industry and an industry that is sustainable” (Participant 1).

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, the factors that influenced the sustainability of food truck entrepreneurs in NMB were reviewed. Both internal and external factors were discussed and explained with the support of quotes and explanations from the seven participants who took part in this study.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The objectives of this study are reviewed and discussed in this chapter, based on the findings as explained in the previous chapter. Each objective is listed with an overview of the findings and how it links to the literature reviewed for this study. The research contribution and findings are also explained, based on the practical, methodological and theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge. The conceptual framework is revisited in this chapter, based on the findings of the study. Recommendations, limitations and further research suggestions are also reviewed. A conclusion on the findings of the study is presented, taking into account the factors that play a role in the sustainability and growth of the food truck industry in NMB.

6.2 Research objectives revisited

Society, local government and food truck entrepreneurs should understand the benefits derived from cultivating the food truck industry for regional economic development. It is argued that one food truck will make a very small contribution to the economy of a city, but the impact of a number of food trucks combined can significantly impact the economy and even attract outside investors (Eldridge 2015: 106). Naicker and Rogerson (2017: 15) have concluded that food markets in South Africa have become a new recreational and tourism product that is a platform for entrepreneurial development. Food truck entrepreneurs benefit from the promotion and growth of food markets. A food truck operation has also been identified as a lucrative business in an economy that offers little stability and fewer opportunities (Loomis, 2013: 80). The freedom of owning a small business and exploring entrepreneurial skills is an endeavour with major benefits to self and the society (Strand, 2015: 73). This research study attempts to resolve the problem statement that no measurable approach exists to evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB.

Primary research question: What are the perceptions of NMB food truck entrepreneurs on the factors influencing the sustainability of their businesses?

The following secondary questions were addressed:

- What are the motivations for starting a food truck business in NMB?
- What are the future plans of NMB food truck entrepreneurs to build towards a sustainable business?
- What are the challenges facing food truck entrepreneurs in NMB?

- How do the regulations in NMB assist food truck entrepreneurs to create an enabling environment that supports their business?

In an attempt to answer the research questions the following objective and sub-objectives were formulated. Primary research objective: To evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB.

In an attempt to achieve the main research objective, the following secondary objectives were reviewed:

- Identify the motivations for starting a food truck business;
- Establish future plans of food truck entrepreneurs in NMB to ensure a sustainable business;
- Determine the challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs in NMB;
- Investigate the policies and governance to create an enabling environment that supports food truck entrepreneurs in NMB.

Each of the research objectives are discussed in more detail below. The findings related to each objective are briefly explained with a few examples from the study.

6.2.1 Research objective 1

Objective 1: Identify the motivations for starting a food truck business.

The most common motivation derived from this study amongst the entrepreneurs was the fact that a food truck business was mobile, as opposed to a structured brick-and-mortar restaurant. Being able to move from one place to the next or from market to market was an added advantage for a food truck and assisted in creating awareness and visibility of the brand. The cost involved in starting a restaurant as opposed to a food truck has also been mentioned, as well as the overheads involved in owning or renting a building to operate a restaurant from. Financially, it makes more sense to own a food truck instead of a restaurant and none of the participants mentioned that they would like to eventually grow the food truck brand into a restaurant, but that they would rather expand with another food truck or a larger vehicle in the future. Other motivating factors include the perception of the ease of start-up costs involved in a food truck business and overcoming unemployment by pursuing a career in the food truck industry. Two participants experienced the food truck industry while working abroad and set up their own business once they returned home.

In the literature that was reviewed for this study, it was found that many chefs who no longer had profitable restaurants had to seek alternative ways of staying in the industry and turned to food trucks (Petersen, 2014: 16). The growth of the industry is believed to be due to the low start-up cost, the

preparation of affordable food in a movable vehicle and the impact of social media that assists customers to locate the trucks (Asmoro et al., 2019: 2188). Mahlangu (2019: 40) found that in Gauteng food truck entrepreneurs were mainly motivated to start their business in need of pursuing independence and following a passion. The food truck industry has grown so much over the years that it now seems to be a choice of many entrepreneurs to start with a food truck business as opposed to being forced to use the food truck as an alternative to a restaurant. The findings by Williams (2014: 717) that suggest starting a food truck business allows entrepreneurs to enter the food industry and then provides a potential for growth into an established brick-and-mortar restaurant is therefore not supported by the participants of this study.

6.2.2 Research objective 2

Objective 2: Establish future plans of food truck entrepreneurs in NMB to ensure a sustainable business.

All participants indicated a willingness to expand their food truck business, either by adding another truck or getting a bigger truck or simply introducing more options to their menu. Other comments include the addition of permanent staff members to help market the growth of the business, and to secure more guaranteed days of business in order to increase revenue. Another point that was mentioned by more than one participant was to keep attending markets and to ensure the visibility of the brand for more private functions, sporting events and festivals. Participants in the study indicated the advantages of attending various markets and events, as the greater the participation, the more entrepreneurs were able to establish customer relations. This in turn also built their brand and awareness of the food truck business. The findings seem consistent with previous research conducted, although there was more focus on the business plan and business strategy for sustainability of the business in the literature.

McGinnis (2012: 45) states the importance of a strategic marketing plan for a sustainable position within the food industry market. According to McGinnis (2012: 45), all food truck entrepreneurs should understand the importance of the social, economic and environmental elements in order to create brand awareness and attract customers (McGinnis, 2012: 45). Tirpak (2018: 236) suggests that food truck owners definitely benefit from the number of events, gatherings and private functions they are able to cater for. Many truck owners describe private events as a guarantee of profit and growth in their businesses (Tirpak, 2018: 236). However, Tirpak (2018: 45) warns that it is still important for food truck entrepreneurs to understand entrepreneurship and be able to think and act quickly, be creative and be aware of trends and needs. Further, Truong (2019: 61) highlighted the importance of understanding and implementing a food truck business plan, a growth strategy and a good business

model in order to ensure the survival and sustainability of the business. Majid et al. (2022: 279) have found that “attaining the long-term competitive advantage for sustained better performance and resiliency of mobile food truck operation” involves a strategy amongst others of good branding and high levels of service. A study conducted by Rohaizad, Ibrahim, Ngali, and Rahmat, (2022: 116) has also found that the younger generation is much more likely to support a food truck business that portrays a strong brand identity through trendy images, high quality and unique features. Fahlevi, Zuhri, Parashakti and Ekhsan (2019: 2437) explain the importance of finding an effective style of leadership by adopting the correct management process for a long-lasting, successful food truck business. The correct leadership style, according to Fahlevi et al. (2019: 2441), will have a significant impact on the dynamics of the business and will increase the competitive advantage and sustainability of a food truck business in this very popular industry.

6.2.3 Research objective 3

Objective 3: Determine the challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs in NMB.

In the findings of this study, it is clear that the main challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs in NMB were financing the business and overcoming challenging times like the lockdown period during the COVID-19 pandemic. To a lesser extent, they were negatively affected by the regulation of food trucks in NMB, specifically the restriction around not being able to trade at the beachfront as well as the requirement of the food handling certification that all staff have to complete. The other challenges mentioned relate to extra cost that the entrepreneurs had not necessarily planned for, for example, the unexpected breakages and replacement of equipment. These findings are aligned with previous research conducted, except for the COVID-19 pandemic challenges mentioned previously. Having funds available to start the business is important as the actual truck, kitchen equipment and layout and design of the truck is a major expense (BizBolts (Pty) Ltd, 2021: 1). It is important for any business to balance good quality and price in order to guarantee profitability (SME South Africa, 2021: 3).

A food truck owner interviewed by Mahlo (2016: 1) added that choosing the correct location for the food truck is critical to the business, and secondly, understanding the target market together with the pricing of the food items. SME South Africa (2021: 4) warns that starting one’s own business is risky and challenging, but suggests finding support from other entrepreneurs in the food truck industry who can share their best practices, knowledge and expertise.

As seen in the literature review chapters of this study, the food truck entrepreneurs in Vancouver, Canada, have major challenges in finding the correct location due to the strict regulations that prevents food trucks from vending within the bounds of school grounds, beaches, parks or private

property. Food trucks are also not allowed to be stationed within 50 meters of other businesses that offer similar food items (Kukic, 2013: 26).

Sadhale and Shetty (2018: 93) conducted a study in India that focused on the challenges faced by food truck entrepreneurs, and location was found to be the major concern. Dealing with the local municipality and licensing offices was also a constant battle for food truck entrepreneurs (Sadhale & Shetty 2018: 93).

The challenges that are not consistent with previous studies include the finding of skilled and experienced staff (SME South Africa, 2021: 4) as well as the ability to create constant awareness and to keep consumers interested (Ideris et al., 2017: 85). That does not mean that no food truck business in NMB finds skilled staff, and brand awareness as a challenge, but it was not mentioned as a major concern by any of the participants in this study. Other challenges include the weather, as outside markets are affected by bad weather and low attendance numbers. Truong (2019: 63) highlights the effects that the weather could have on the business operations of a food truck and suggests that owners manage their fixed costs accordingly. Naicker and Rogerson (2017: 8) found that food markets in Johannesburg always seem to brave the weather conditions no matter what in order to attempt continued attraction of tourists and locals.

New food truck businesses also find it challenging to enter the organised markets and need to find alternative ways of creating awareness of their brand. Fahlevi et al. (2019: 2441) have found that night markets in Wellington, New Zealand, in particular, are extremely competitive due to their popularity amongst tourists. The challenge faced by food truck entrepreneurs is to get into the markets and remain competitive amongst the high volume of trucks operating in the same space.

6.2.4 Research objective 4

Objective 4: Investigate the policies and governance to create an enabling environment that supports food truck entrepreneurs in NMB.

The regulations in NMB were a challenge to some extent for the food truck entrepreneurs rather than supporting business development and growth. Not being able to trade at popular destinations like the beachfront had a negative impact on food truck businesses. The certification requirements to trade and the health and safety requirements for food trucks were however welcomed by the food truck entrepreneurs as a way to keep the industry protected and safe. Although the visits by health inspectors were supported and understood by all, the timing of these visits should be reconsidered. Health inspectors target festivals to do their inspections of the food trucks and often the owners and staff are extremely busy serving customers while trying to answer questions from the inspectors.

Okumus and Sonmez (2019: 218) also found that it was challenging for food truck entrepreneurs to have health inspections during busy times and preferred to schedule these during quieter months.

The benefits of food trucks in a city and the impact they on the overall social, cultural and economic environments have been mentioned before. It is therefore clear why it is important for regulations and policies affecting food trucks to not be too restrictive but rather supportive in order for food truck businesses to operate and thrive. Williams (2014: 717) found that a number of cities in the USA keep updating policies and regulations pertaining to food trucks in order to maintain food safety; however Martin (2014: 1873) found that the changes in policy were still somewhat controversial and very restrictive. A study conducted by Williams (2014: 708) found that a number of regulations were outdated and challenging to most food truck entrepreneurs, as in many major USA cities there are large areas where trading of food vendors is not allowed, similar to the beachfront in NMB. Strand (2015: 63) demonstrated in his study that strict laws with regard to food truck businesses in the city of Philadelphia limited the business potential and growth in customers. Like food truck owners in the USA, the food truck entrepreneurs in Auckland also felt particularly constrained by strict regulations, and a list of licensing and high rental fees made it difficult for small businesses to survive and grow (Thomas, 2016: 51).

When comparing the findings of this study to previous research, it does at least seem that the food truck entrepreneurs in NMB do not feel too restricted by the policies and regulations. However, there is a general concern that the bylaws in NMB do have a negative effect on their business, mainly because food trucks cannot trade on the beachfront.

6.3 Research contribution

Most of the research findings in this study already form part of existing research, with the exception of the major impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on food truck businesses. A discussion in the section below will highlight the findings that can form part of the existing body of knowledge.

6.3.1 Findings

Reviewing the factors discussed in this study, it is evident that a number of factors are most important for a food truck business to remain sustainable and profitable. Majid et al. (2022: 279) highlight the importance of implementing a business plan that will provide a competitive advantage over a long period of time to ensure sustainability. In this context, a sustainable business refers to a longstanding or continuous operation. Being profitable refers to making money and being able to cover expenses, overheads and costs without overspending or losing money. Luu et al. (2015: 13) explain that for a food truck business to be sustainable, it has to ensure that it remains aware of its revenue and profits.

Fahlevi et al. (2019: 2437) view a sustainable food truck business as one with long-lasting success. It has also been established that both internal and external factors play an important role in the success of a food truck business.

Awareness of the industry in NMB was mostly due to entrepreneurs who followed trends as seen and observed by other food truck businesses in major cities of South Africa or the American industry. It was established that the food truck industry was growing in NMB, although at a slow pace. The support was relatively good and the demand was relatively high, especially for outdoor markets currently. There was also a growing interest in food trucks to cater for private functions and corporate events.

The food truck market and growth of the industry in NMB does seem to be slower in comparison to other major cities in South Africa. The market was small and entrepreneurs have to rely on local support and reoccurring business. Unique product offerings at the correct price were important, and consumers require good menu options. Food truck entrepreneurs in NMB all relied on social media as a marketing tool for their business and also relied on word of mouth and being visible at markets to create awareness of their brand. The weather was identified as having a major impact on outdoor markets, as bad weather resulted in low attendance and low sales.

The regulations in NMB on the whole did not contribute to the success of food truck entrepreneurs in the metro, mainly due to the restrictions around trading at the beachfront. This seems to be the only reason why participants of this study indicated that the regulations had a negative effect on their business. It appeared that the location to trade was an important factor for food truck entrepreneurs in NMB. The certification requirements to trade and the health and safety requirements for food trucks were supported and understood by all. Visits from the health inspectors could however be more consistent and maybe planned outside of busy festivals or markets. However, visits by health inspectors could increase customer confidence in good health and safety practices by food truck entrepreneurs.

Having the required skills to survive and adapt in this industry is important, as mentioned by nearly every participant in the study. Both managerial and financial skills are vital for food truck entrepreneurs to survive and be profitable. It is important to budget, cost and forecast. Managing the cash flow and ensuring that the business attempts to build on savings is important as every business will experience favourable and unfavourable months. People skills and management of staff were also identified as important skills for a successful food truck business.

In this study, it was found that NMB food truck entrepreneurs did not deem a formal business plan important for sustainability. Most participants indicated that they had an informal business plan with basic short term planning. Some of the participants in this study indicated that their main focus was to attend every market and festival possible, while others selected specific markets that would add value to their brand. The food truck entrepreneurs were aware of their competitors as in most of the comments it was mentioned that the menus of the various food trucks were unique and personal to the owners.

Food truck entrepreneurs who took part in this study listed customer relationships, consistent and attractive product offerings, good branding and clean equipment as vital contributors to a successful business. The branding of the food truck business in particular was mentioned numerous times as important. Creating awareness and building a strong brand was therefore vital for the sustainability and growth of the business. The use of social media to update and attract customers was undoubtedly a factor that ensured the visibility of the brand. Social media in particular was one of the ways that many food trucks survived during COVID-19, by posting home-cooked meals and take-away options for their customers.

In most cases, the participants had a very broad target market with no details or specifics as to who the target market actually was. The food truck industry in NMB did not seem to be too competitive as each participant believed that they served a market that enjoyed their food and menu options. It has however been mentioned already that NMB was a difficult place to do business in and that the market was relatively small in the metro compared to other parts of the country. Entrepreneurs had therefore to rely on local support and repeat business from their customers. The fact that outdoor markets were currently a trend in NMB was beneficial to all food truck entrepreneurs in the metro.

6.3.2 Practical contribution

The practical contribution of this study towards the existing body of knowledge is essentially that food truck entrepreneurs in NMB experienced similar challenges and obstacles towards building a sustainable and successful business as their counterparts around the world. The framework of what could assist in building a sustainable food truck business is mostly based on the findings by DiPietro (2016: 1213) and Truong (2019: 62). The framework could be adapted for ease of use by new entrepreneurs in the food truck industry or current owners who might seek guidance on how to get their business on track. It can also be used by metro officials and local governments to determine where support might be needed in order to promote and support the entrepreneurs in their business ventures by reviewing policies, regulations and bylaws. Improved regulations could help food truck owners to grow their businesses and employ more people as well as upskill others. New food truck

entrepreneurs wishing to enter the food truck industry could also base their planning and business opportunities from the research conducted in this study. Food truck associations would be able to understand factors better that are required for their members to successfully run their food truck businesses and provide better representation of issues to other organisations, for example, city councils.

6.3.3 Methodological contribution

The primary research objective of this study was to evaluate the factors influencing the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB. A qualitative study was conducted by interviewing seven food truck entrepreneurs in the metro in an attempt to establish these factors. In most food truck-related studies conducted previously, the method implemented was quantitative or mixed methodology. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:174) explain that the goal of qualitative research is to explore, understand, and describe the contextual issues in detail. Semi-structured interviews, consisting of a series of open-ended questions, were used in this study in order to learn more about the participants' specific opinions, views and beliefs regarding the factors influencing their businesses. Other researchers can follow the methodology used in the current study to understand food truck businesses in similar contexts.

6.3.4 Theoretical contribution

The conceptual framework as illustrated in chapter two was adapted slightly with more information that emerged from the analysis of this study. The main factors, both internal and external remain relatively the same, with more detail added to the specific variables as displayed in Figure 7 below.

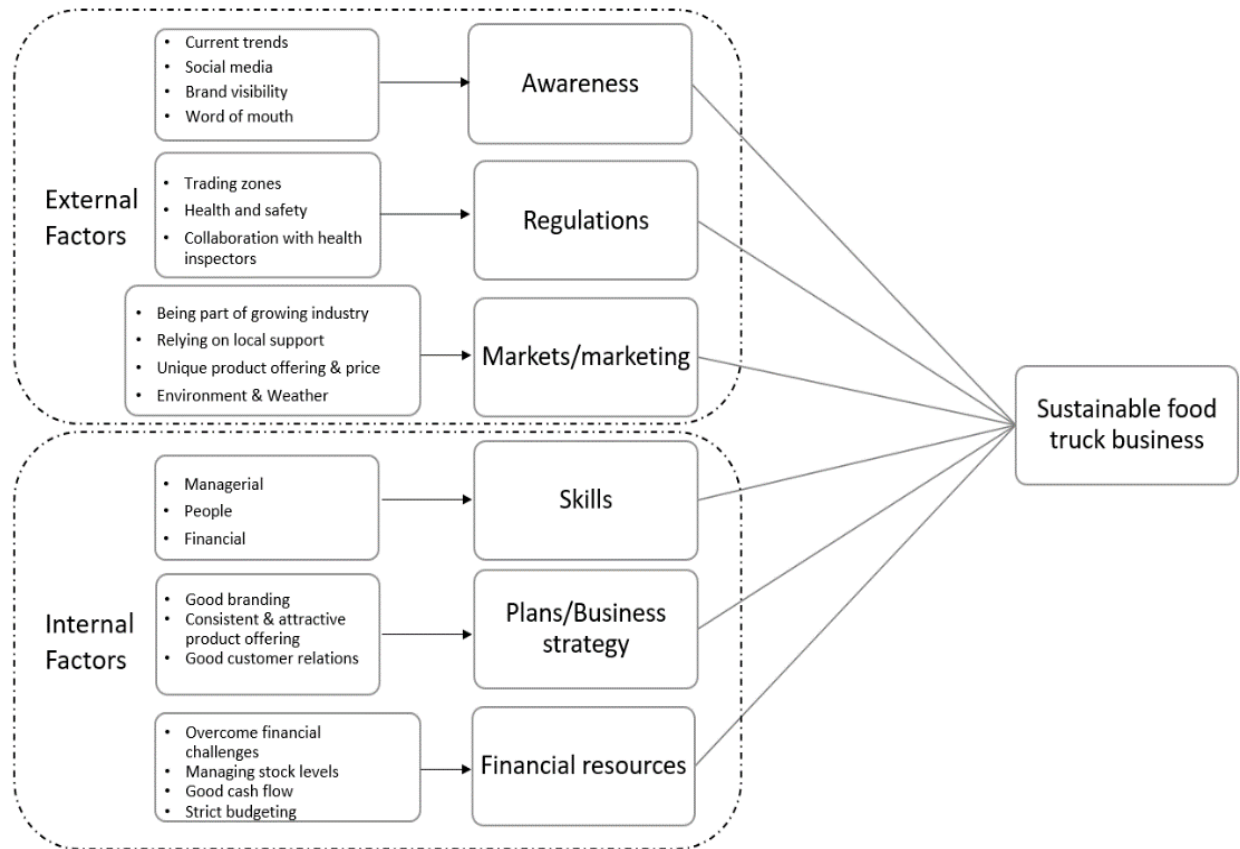


Figure 7: Revised conceptual framework

As summarised in Figure 7, the assumption is that both internal and external factors play a role in the sustainability of a food truck business. Three main external factors have been identified as contributing factors, namely awareness, regulations and marketing/markets. Based on the findings of this study, a revised conceptual framework is presented to further list specifics that are associated with each factor. The assumption is that should a food truck entrepreneur focus on the current trends within the industry, make use of social media, ensure strong brand visibility and receive positive word-of-mouth advertising from its customers, it would cover the awareness factor of both the food truck industry and the actual business. Regulations controlling the food truck industry are another external factor, and by working closely with the health inspectors, complying with the health and safety requirements and by adhering to the trading zone restrictions, a food truck business would be deemed compliant and would receive approval to operate. Finally, marketing and markets are the third external factor that is assumed to have an effect on the sustainability of a food truck business. The points associated with marketing and markets include the support of local customers, offering unique products at reasonable prices, and being part of the food truck industry as opposed to operating in silos. The environment and weather play a role in the success of markets and are deemed as external factors as they cannot be controlled by the entrepreneur. The internal factors, on the other hand, can

be controlled by the entrepreneur and include three main factors, namely skills, business strategy and financial resources. The assumption is that managerial skills, people skills and financial skills are vital to the sustainability of a food truck business. Good branding of the truck, consistent and unique product offerings to the consumers, and good customer relations all form part of a good business plan and strategy to remain successful. Finally, financial resources are assumed also to be an internal factor, and require the entrepreneur to overcome financial challenges by being creative when business is slow, managing stock levels and not over-purchase ingredients and goods, ensuring good cash flow and maintaining a strict budget for the business.

6.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations derive from the findings and themes within this study. In order for food truck businesses to remain sustainable and profitable in the long term, entrepreneurs need to focus on both internal and external factors:

- Food trucks are popular and form part of many markets, festivals and events in and around NMB. Entrepreneurs have to remain aware of the trends within the industry and offer products that are unique and correctly priced.
- Food truck branding and visibility must be memorable to customers, and entrepreneurs should attend every market possible to remain a brand that is well known to the locals. It has been determined that people want to support local products and food truck entrepreneurs should leverage the opportunity.
- Food truck entrepreneurs should make use of social media in order to advance their brand image and promote the markets or festivals they attend. Social media have the ability to reach thousands of consumers and are a vital tool to help market the outdoor markets and or festivals and events.
- The recommendation to the local municipality is to review the restriction on food trucks not being able to trade on the beachfront areas of NMB. Allowing food trucks to trade at the popular beachfront will encourage and attract tourists and create a vibrant atmosphere for locals. The food truck entrepreneurs will benefit from the support and will ensure a constant flow of income for the businesses.

- Health inspectors should not conduct inspections during busy festivals, but rather schedule a convenient time for both parties to do the health and safety audits and interviews. Alternatively, early mornings during festival set-up, inspectors can conduct a quick audit to ensure all food trucks have the required certifications in place for trading.
- Food truck entrepreneurs should build on their knowledge and experience in how to manage their business, finances and people. These three skills have been identified in this study as most important for entrepreneurs.
- Good customer relationships and a high standard of service have been identified as a major success factors, due to food truck owners having to rely on local support and returning customers. Entrepreneurs are therefore encouraged to always ensure good service and strong customer relationships.

Although a formal business plan was not identified as crucial to the success of a food truck in this study, it is recommended that entrepreneurs attempt to put a business plan in place for the future. The industry seems to be growing in NMB, and with more competitors on the rise, it would be beneficial to have a long term plan in place. Food truck owners are encouraged to have a plan in place to overcome possible financial challenges. Entrepreneurs need to be creative in their service and offerings in order to attempt to build business savings and manage cash flow accordingly for the quiet months. It is important to manage stock levels and budget strictly. Planning is vital and food truck owners must ensure they have an inventory list in place to assist.

6.5 Limitations and further research

The findings of this study were limited to only seven food truck entrepreneurs in NMB. The total registered number of active food trucks in the metro is not available from the municipal offices and it was therefore difficult to determine the actual population of food truck businesses. The input from other food truck entrepreneurs outside of NMB was also not considered in this study because of limitations of budget and time. The study is cautious of making generalisations to a large population, but rather sees the findings from analytical generalisations, where theoretical statements emerging from the study can be used to explain the findings of studies conducted in a similar context.

Further research should be conducted and compared with food truck entrepreneurs in other major cities in South Africa (e.g., Cape Town and Johannesburg) to determine if the factors that influence the businesses are different depending on the province. The regulations around food trucks operating

in other cities could also be reviewed to establish what the differences are in policy around the country and how the regulations could be revised to support the businesses.

The study did not investigate the economic effect of food truck businesses on NMB and surrounding areas. The study was cross-sectional and did not observe the food truck businesses over a long period of time. Eldrige (2015: 119) also suggested in his research that more data should be made available in order to fully comprehend the short- and long-term effects of food truck businesses on the economy of a city. Further research could therefore also be conducted to determine the economic effect of food trucks in South African cities.

6.6 Conclusions

It has been determined that the external factors behind creating awareness of the food truck industry in the NMB market are very important. Awareness is created via social media platforms, food trucks being visible on the streets and word of mouth. Entrepreneurs need to ensure they build a strong, well-known brand in order to sustain their business and experience growth in the future. Food truck owners must understand the NMB market, and entrepreneurs must know what the trends are in order to stay in business. It was found that the food truck market in NMB was a growing industry with strong demand for markets, festivals and events. Current regulations and policies in NMB do not seem to affect the long-term sustainability of the food truck industry. However, most entrepreneurs would like the metro to reconsider the trading of food trucks on the popular beachfront areas. Internal factors that played a role in the sustainability of food truck business include the importance of managerial skills as well as financial acumen and people skills. Financial resources are vital and an attempt to save money for the quiet months was one of the key findings for food truck businesses to remain financially viable. Working long hours and being active at all markets, festivals, events and private functions are deemed most important to remain profitable and financially stable. Food truck entrepreneurs in NMB rely largely on continuous local support for their businesses and therefore deem customer satisfaction and returning customers as vitally important. A formal business plan does not seem to be as important, although the participants in this study displayed a good understanding of their customer needs, menu pricing and competitors within the food truck industry. Outdoor markets, private events and corporate functions were popular trends currently in NMB for food truck businesses. The markets attracted many people to open, safe, outdoor spaces in and around the metro as an alternative to shopping malls. Food truck entrepreneurs also noted the increase in support for local produce and products by consumers. These were all factors that played a vital part in the sustainability and growth of the food truck industry in NMB.

6.7 Summary

The research objectives of this study were reviewed and concluded in this chapter. The research contributes to the body of knowledge and was discussed together with the recommendations, limitations and further research possibilities. The theoretical contribution was reviewed and the final conclusion of the study was presented.

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APPENDIX A: CPUT ETHICAL CLEARANCE



P.O. Box 1906 | Bellville 7535
 Symphony Road Bellville 7535
 South Africa
 Tel: +27 21 4603291
 Email: fbmsethics@cput.ac.za

Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
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The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **22 February 2022**, ethics **APPROVAL** was granted to **Francois Naude Loots (204070600)** for a research activity for **M Tech: Business Administration (Entrepreneurship)** at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of project:	Factors influencing the sustainability of Food Truck Entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay
	Researcher (s): Dr F Makoza and Prof G C Iwu

Decision: APPROVED

	28 February 2022
Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	Date

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the CPUT Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study requires that the researcher stops the study and immediately informs the chairperson of the relevant Faculty Ethics Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines, and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, notably compliance with the Bill of Rights as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) and where applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003 and/or other legislations that is relevant.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after two (2) years for Masters and Doctorate research project from the date of issue of the Ethics Certificate. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report (REC 6) will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Clearance Certificate No | 2022_FBMSREC 004

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY
COUNCILLOR RENE MEYER
(WARD 7)

College Drive, Mill Park, Port Elizabeth, 6001
Tel: 041-373 1469, Cell: 084 473 1166
E-Mail: ward7@mandelametro.gov.za




2021/09/16

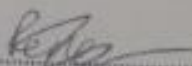
To Whom It May Concern

This office hereby acknowledge that Francois Naude Loots, Student Number 204070600 registered with the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (MTech Business Administration in Entrepreneurship) will be conducting research in this ward for studies namely on the Sustainability of Food Truck Entrepreneurs in NMB.

Kind Regards


.....
Cllr Rene Meyer

RENE MEYER
PR COUNCILLOR
NELSON MANDELA BAY MUNICIPALITY
COMMISSIONER OF OATHS EX-OFFICIO
DESIGNATED IN TERMS OF GOVERNMENT
NOTICE No. R1687 DATED 24 DECEMBER 1998

SIGNED: 
.....

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT



Cape Peninsula University of Technology

**Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Ethics Informed Consent Form**

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Category of Participants (tick as appropriate):

<i>Staff/Workers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Teachers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Parents</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Lecturers</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Students</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Other (specify)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>Entrepreneur/Business Owner</i>							

You are kindly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by **FRANCOIS LOOTS** from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

The findings of this study will contribute towards (tick as appropriate):

<i>An undergraduate project</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A conference paper</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>An Honours project</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<i>A published journal article</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>A Masters/doctoral thesis</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<i>A published report</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Selection criteria

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are:

- (a) An entrepreneur operating a Food track business.
- (b) Owner and founder of a Food truck start-up business.
- (c) Municipality official responsible for by-laws for Food truck businesses.

The information below gives details about the study to help you decide whether you would want to participate.

Title of the research:

Factors influencing the sustainability of Food Truck Entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay

A brief explanation of what the research involves:

Food trucks in South Africa have become significantly popular over the past few years. This research seeks to investigate the factors influencing the sustainability of food truck entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB) as there is no know study to the researcher that has been conducted on this topic in NMB before. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the factors that entrepreneurs believe, influence the sustainability of the food truck industry in NMB. The objectives of the study are : 1) to identify the motivations for starting a food truck business; 2) to determine the challenges facing food truck entrepreneurs in NMB; and 3) to investigate the policies and governance to create an enabling environment that supports food truck entrepreneurs.

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



Faculty of Business and Management Sciences

Department of Entrepreneurship

P.O. Box 652, Cape Town 8000

Study Title: Factors influencing the sustainability of Food Truck Entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay

Researcher: Francois Naudé Loots

Supervisor: Dr Frank Makoza & Prof. Chux Iwu

Date: 1 October 2021

Dear Food Truck Entrepreneur

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to determine the factors that influence the sustainability of food truck entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay.

Participation in the study involves the following:

- answering a series of questions asked by the researcher in an interview format;
- taking part in the interview will be completely voluntary;
- the interview should not take longer than 45 minutes;
- the interview will be audio-taped and later transcribed for the purpose of data analysis;
- all information gathered during the interview will remain confidential;
- no names will be recorded on the transcript as codes will be used to categorise participants;
- there is no known risk for taking part in this study.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francois Naudé Loots".

Francois Naudé Loots
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APPENDIX E: QUESTIONNAIRE

Factors influencing the sustainability of Food Truck Entrepreneurs in Nelson Mandela Bay

April 2022

Interview script/questions

Internal factors:

Skills

1. What is your career background?
2. How long have you been in the food industry?
3. What sort of skills have you developed since managing your business?
4. Do you employ any other staff?
5. What skills do they have?

Plan/Strategy

6. Do you have a business plan for your food truck?
7. What would you say are the main factors to be mindful of for your business to be successful?
8. What would you say are the main trends currently within the food truck industry?

Financial resources

9. What are the key sources for financing your business?
10. Explain any challenges in financing the business.
11. How did you overcome these challenges?

External factors:

Awareness

12. How did you become aware of the opportunity for a food truck business?
13. What motivated you to start a food truck business?
14. What are the opportunities for food truck business in NMB?

Markets

15. Who would you say is your target market?
16. How do your customers come to know about your business or the services that you offer?
17. What would you say makes your food truck business unique and innovative?

Regulations

18. Explain how the bylaws from the city council affect the operations of the business?

19. What are the specific legal and hygiene requirements that food trucks in NMB need to adhere to?
20. How often are you visited by a health and hygiene inspector?
21. What are your future plans for your business?