

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE FACTORS IMPACTING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF NASI KANDAR AMONG RESTAURANT OWNERS IN PENANG

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the sustainability challenges confronting Nasi Kandar eateries in Penang, an integral facet of local culture and economy. It aims to comprehend the factors influencing these establishments' sustainability, spanning economic, socio-cultural, and environmental realms. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, 15 purposively selected participants underwent in-depth interviews, with thematic analysis unveiling prevalent themes. The findings underscore the intricate nature of sustainability in Penang's Nasi Kandar scene, emphasizing aspects like cost management, staff training, technology integration, menu flexibility, sustainable practices, policy alignment, and community involvement. The research contributes a conceptual framework for addressing industry challenges, stressing holistic approaches integrating menu adaptability, sustainable practices, policy alignment, and community engagement. Practical implications provide actionable insights for restaurant owners to develop robust strategies. Nevertheless, the study recognizes the necessity for further empirical validation and deeper analysis to refine these strategies. Overall, it furnishes a thorough examination of sustainability hurdles in Penang's Nasi Kandar sector, accompanied by pragmatic measures to fortify long-term viability.

Keywords: Nasi Kandar; Culinary sustainability; Phenomenology; Malaysian gastronomy; Cultural heritage

Introduction

Nasi Kandar, a popular Malaysian dish originating from Penang, holds a significant place in the culinary landscape of the region. The sustainability of Nasi Kandar among restaurant owners in Penang is a topic of growing interest due to its economic, social, and environmental implications. Understanding the factors that impact the sustainability of Nasi Kandar establishments is crucial for ensuring their long-term viability and success in a competitive market.

Factors such as food safety practices, environmental sensitivity, food quality, and sustainable practices play a vital role in shaping consumer satisfaction and loyalty towards Nasi Kandar restaurants. Studies have shown that green restaurants implementing sustainable practices tend to have higher consumer satisfaction and revisit intentions (Chaturvedi et al., 2022). Additionally, the cleanliness of premises and personal hygiene practices are crucial factors influencing consumer perceptions of food safety in Nasi Kandar eateries (Ismail et al., 2019).

Moreover, the role of government support, innovation, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy has been highlighted for the survival of small and medium-sized restaurants during crises, emphasizing the importance of external and internal factors in ensuring business sustainability (Najib et al., 2021). Furthermore, the impact of owner characteristics, such as gender, education, and prior disaster experience, on the sustainability of small businesses post-disaster has been noted (Marshall & Schrank, 2020).

In the context of sustainability, the integration of sustainable construction practices, ethical considerations, and natural food values in restaurant operations has been identified as key for achieving excellence and long-term success in the foodservice industry (Cristóbal-Lobatón, 2023). Understanding the dynamics of sustainability perceptions across different types of restaurants and the adoption of sustainable activities is crucial for enhancing sustainability in the foodservice sector (Batat, 2021).

This study aims to conduct a phenomenological exploration of the factors impacting the sustainability of Nasi Kandar among restaurant owners in Penang. By delving into the lived experiences and perceptions of restaurant owners, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for enhancing the sustainability of Nasi Kandar establishments in Penang, with a specific focus on addressing the specific research questions:

- 1. What key factor primarily influences sustainability within Nasi Kandar restaurants?"*
- 2. What are the benefits of maintaining the sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants?"*
- 3. What are the main challenges faced in sustaining Nasi Kandar restaurants?"*
- 4. What are the best practices and recommendations for ensuring the sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants?"*
- 5. What government policies and regulations are necessary to support the sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants?"*

Through this inquiry, the study aims to contribute to scholarly understanding by uncovering insights factors influences main challenges and best practices of Nasi Kandar restaurants that can inform practical measures aimed at enhancing the sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants in Penang.

Problem Statement

The sustainability of Nasi Kandar establishments in Penang is jeopardized by economic, socio-cultural, and environmental challenges. Economic uncertainties, rising costs, and competition threaten profitability (Razzak et al., 2023), while changing demographics and sustainable practices complicate the restaurant operations (Madeira et al., 2020). External shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbate these issues, particularly for small businesses and ethnic minority entrepreneurs (Parolin & Lee, 2022). Digitalization adds pressure, as SMEs struggle to adapt (Jaish et al., 2023), necessitating innovative solutions for sustainable development (Afiyah et al., 2023). Addressing these multifaceted

challenges is critical for the long-term viability of Nasi Kandar restaurants, requiring resilience strategies informed by research insights.

Literature Review

Destination Perceived Quality and Tourist Satisfaction

Wang et al. (2017) explored the relationship between destination perceived quality, tourist satisfaction, and word-of-mouth. Their study revealed that destination perceived quality significantly impacts tourist satisfaction, which in turn influences word-of-mouth. However, the study focused on tourists, and there is a need to investigate how destination perceived quality affects the satisfaction and loyalty of local customers towards Nasi Kandar restaurants in Penang.

Operations Management Strategies and Customer Satisfaction

Torlak et al. (2019) investigated the impact of operations management strategies on customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions at café-restaurants. The findings indicated that operations management strategies play a crucial role in enhancing customer satisfaction and influencing their behavioral intentions. This suggests that effective operations management in Nasi Kandar restaurants could lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty, which is vital for the sustainability of these establishments.

Crowdsourcing Platforms for Survey Research

Cobanoglu et al. (2021) provided a guide for using crowdsourcing platforms for survey research, focusing on the case of Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). While this study is not directly related to Nasi Kandar restaurants, it highlights the potential for utilizing crowdsourcing platforms to gather feedback and insights from customers. Future research could explore the application of crowdsourcing platforms to understand customer preferences, satisfaction, and loyalty towards Nasi Kandar restaurants in Penang.

Factors Determining George Town as a City of Gastronomy

Khoo and Badarulzaman (2014) identified various factors that determine George Town as a City of Gastronomy. The study emphasized the significance of food culture, heritage, and culinary diversity in positioning George Town as a renowned gastronomic destination. Understanding these factors is crucial for evaluating the sustainability of Nasi Kandar, a significant component of Penang's culinary heritage.

Impact of Social Media Adoption on Competitive Advantage

Bakri (2017) investigated the impact of social media adoption on competitive advantage in small and medium enterprises. The findings highlighted the role of social media in enhancing competitiveness and market presence. Given the increasing use of social media in the food and beverage industry, future research could explore the impact of social media adoption on the visibility, customer engagement, and overall sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants in Penang.

Restaurant Selection Criteria

Scozzafava et al. (2017) studied the factors influencing restaurant selection. While the focus was not on Nasi Kandar specifically, the findings indicated that customer decision-making regarding restaurant selection is influenced by various factors such as food quality, service, and ambiance. Understanding the specific attributes that drive customer choices in the context of Nasi Kandar restaurants can provide valuable insights for enhancing their sustainability.

Methodology

Methodological Approach: The study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design, utilizing in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. Phenomenology aims to uncover the essence of a phenomenon through the perspectives of individuals who have experienced it. In this context, the phenomenon is the sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants in Penang.

Sampling: Purposive sampling will be employed to select 15 participants who own or manage Nasi Kandar restaurants in Penang. The criteria for selection will include a diverse representation of establishments, considering factors such as size, location, and years in operation. The goal is to capture a range of experiences and perspectives within the Nasi Kandar business community.

Data Collection: In-depth, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the selected participants. The interviews will be guided by open-ended questions developed based on the subquestions outlined in the study. The participants will be encouraged to share their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the sustainability factors of their Nasi Kandar businesses. The interviews will be audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate data capture.

Data Analysis: Thematic analysis will be employed to identify common themes and patterns within the interview data. The responses from participants will be transcribed, and codes will be generated to categorize significant statements and ideas. These codes will then be organized into themes, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors impacting the sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants.

Ethical Considerations: The study will adhere to ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants' autonomy. Any personal identifiers will be removed from the data to maintain anonymity.

Result

Presentation of Themes

This study aims to explore and understand the real-life experiences of Nasi Kanda restaurant owners in Penang regarding the factors that impact the sustainability of their businesses. Through thematic analysis, we have delved into various aspects associated with the sustainability of Nasi Kandar restaurants. The outcomes from interview sessions with selected participants have been carefully organized and are presented in Table 1.

This table outlines the major themes identified in response to specific inquiries posed during the research interviews. The thematic analysis outcome in Table 1 presents participants' responses to each question asked during the interview sessions. These responses have been categorized into focused themes, providing insights into the lived experiences of Nasi Kandar restaurant owners regarding factors influencing the sustainability of their establishments.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis Outcome

Specific Questions	Focus Theme
1.Main factors influencing sustainability	Menu Adaptability
2.Benefits of sustaining Nasi Kandar restaurants	Cultural Appreciation
3.Challenges of sustaining Nasi Kandar restaurants	Market Competition
4.Best practices and recommendations	Sustainable Practices
5.Government policies and regulations	Environmental Regulations

The thematic analysis results will be elaborated upon in the discussion section, where the findings derived from the focused themes will be further explored and discussed.

Discussion

The sustainability discourse surrounding Nasi Kandar restaurants reveals an array of interconnected themes that offer profound insights into the industry's dynamics. These themes collectively illuminate the multifaceted nature of sustainability within the sector, emphasizing the intricate interplay of social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors. Through a phenomenological inquiry, participant voices provide invaluable perspectives on the critical factors influencing sustainability. Sustaining Nasi Kandar restaurants necessitates adept navigation of diverse elements, including menu adaptability, cultural appreciation, market competition, sustainable practices, and compliance with governmental regulations. The thematic analysis outcomes presented in Table 1 provide a comprehensive exploration of the subquestions, revealing the intricate complexities and essential strategies vital for securing the longevity and prosperity of Nasi Kandar establishments.

Menu adaptability

Participant insights highlight the importance of menu adaptability and market differentiation in the nasi kandar business landscape. Such participant 2; emphasizes the significance of maintaining authenticity while innovating and diversifying menus, aligning with the concept that dynamic capabilities in businesses are influenced by factors such as social norms and performance-based culture, impacting the paradigm of open innovation (Seo & Lee, 2019).

Additionally, Participant 4 stresses strategic branding, online presence, and partnerships with local businesses as effective strategies for market differentiation. This aligns with the idea that partnerships are crucial for achieving scalability and expanding into new markets, as supported in the literature (Sarjana & Widokarti, 2020). This study further reinforces by underlining the importance of business relationships and network partnerships in driving sustainable B2B collaborations (Graça, 2021).

Insights from both participants underscore the dual importance of menu adaptability in the competitive business environment. By leveraging innovative menu offerings while maintaining authenticity and implementing strategic branding, online visibility, and local partnerships, businesses can effectively differentiate themselves in the market and enhance their competitiveness.

Cultural appreciation

Participants emphasized cultural appreciation is crucial for Nasi Kandar restaurants, influencing their strategies by aligning offerings with local traditions and engaging in community events (Liu et al., 2021). Focusing on cultural authenticity enhances post-consumption evaluations and behavioral intentions, fostering customer trust and satisfaction (Yusof et al., 2020). This emphasis on cultural authenticity positively impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty, driven by factors like food and service quality (Ruhluel & Bayram, 2021). In essence, cultural appreciation is integral to Nasi Kandar restaurants, ensuring their success by attracting diverse customers and creating memorable dining experiences (Ahmad & Johari, 2022).

Market competition

The recommendations provided by participants 6, 7, and 13 highlight practical solutions to challenges such as market competition. Training is vital for addressing organizational challenges, enhancing employee performance, and boosting productivity, as shown by studies (Karim et al., 2019), (Batool et al., 2021), and (Raza et al., 2021). Chowdhury and Uddin (2022) stress the need for adequate training to ensure job performance in competitive markets. Jeni et al. (2021) highlights how training contributes to organizational success. Increasing compensation, as suggested by Diliantari and Indrayani (2019), can improve job satisfaction and performance.

Sustainable practices

The incorporation of sustainable practices emerged as a key theme, influenced by both market trends and government policies. Participants emphasized the importance of eco-friendly initiatives, local sourcing, and waste reduction to align with contemporary values (Participant 5). Government incentives, particularly tax benefits for sustainable practices, were acknowledged as influential (Participant 6). Various studies have explored the nexus between tax policies, environmental sustainability, and economic growth. Evidence suggests a positive correlation between environmental taxes, economic development, and environmental sustainability (Ganda & Garidzirai, 2021).

Government regulations

Government regulations significantly influence the strategies and operations of Nasi Kandar restaurants, particularly in areas such as licensing, health and safety compliance, and immigration policies (Reynolds & Wilkinson, 2020). Participants underscore the importance of government support, streamlined licensing processes, and incentives for cultural preservation (Patiño et al., 2020). Recent concerns about hygiene standards highlight the necessity of government regulations to uphold public health standards (Tulchinsky, 2018). Government support is crucial for small and medium-sized restaurant survival during crises, impacting business survival and consumption intention (Chou et al., 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of Nasi Kandar restaurant sustainability in Penang reveals a complex interplay of factors crucial for their long-term viability. Through a phenomenological approach, key themes such as menu adaptability, cultural appreciation, market competition, sustainable practices, and governmental regulations emerge as central influencers. These elements intricately shape the landscape of Nasi Kandar establishments amidst economic, socio-cultural, and environmental challenges. By embracing innovation, preserving cultural authenticity, navigating competitive markets, implementing sustainable practices, and collaborating with supportive governmental policies, Nasi Kandar restaurants can pave the way for lasting success. This study

underscores the necessity of holistic strategies grounded in diverse perspectives, ensuring the preservation and advancement of Penang's culinary heritage. While offering a comprehensive overview, further empirical research and nuanced analysis are essential to validate and refine these findings. Nevertheless, the fusion of participant insights and existing literature underscores the multifaceted nature of sustainability within the distinctive realm of Nasi Kandar restaurants in Penang.

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