

“Econamit”: Exploring the Food Cart Economy in an Urbanized City

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ABSTRACT

One well-known aspect of culinary culture that is typically found in urban areas is street food. In Filipino slang, "econamit" refers to a food that is both tasty and affordable. This qualitative study employed narrative inquiry to explore the food cart economy in Kabankalan City, an urbanized city in Philippines. In-depth interview with five street food vendors were conducted and data were analysed through thematic analysis. The recurring themes disclosed that the prevalent reasons of street food vending in Kabankalan City are: a) inherited knowledge from the parents; b) fast to earn money; c) to help the family d) for everyday income; and e) affordable and easy to sell. While, the determinants of Street food identified by the street food vendors are: a) people's taste and preferences; b) fast and affordable; and c) gastronomic needs. There are only two problems and impediments faced by street food vendors, first is the weather condition when it rains and wet, and the second is the “eat and run” tactics of the customers. The success stories of street food vendors revolved around the overwhelming income they receive from the business and they were able to reach their dreams for the family, themed as “welcoming income” and “reaching the rich dreams”. Thus, Street food vendors may strengthen their capacities and skills through training in food handling, and business information so as to enhance their health sanitation and productivity.

Keywords: Food culture, food cart economy, narrative inquiry, street food, urbanized city

INTRODUCTION

Food cart culture is pervasive all over the world. Particularly, street food is a widely known form of food culture that is usually visible in urbanized area. In fact, the concept of street food has existed in the United States for decades and around the world for centuries (Glicker, 2014). Tinker (1997) as cited in (Tavonga, 2014) defines street food as any minimally processed food sold on the street for immediate consumption. Undeniably, many would agree that there is pleasure in consuming street food especially it offers fast, and affordable prices. “It doesn't matter how refined your palate is or how much you make—anyone gets to enjoy, for a few minutes at least, the feeling of being part of a larger community” (Lewis, 2011) as cited in (Glicker, 2014).

Above and beyond the utility of consuming affordable meal, food culture pave the way for local culinary innovation, micro scale entrepreneurial activity, and a sense of localized experience. In the Philippine context, rapid urban development, rising trend of unemployment, and lower take-home income, drove many Filipinos to engage in informal sector particularly in street food vending. According to Statista Research Department (2023) the Philippines' total sales from street stalls and kiosks in 2022 came to almost 1.58 billion US dollars, a rise over the previous year. It was predicted that in 2022, sales of this kind of restaurant will keep rising. Filipino street food is an enormous part of the Philippine culinary culture; it is a tangible evidence of the creativity of Filipinos in making tastiest flavours and combining ingredients for palatable experience for the masses. It is considered pop-art and comfort food placed in a portable package that reached and attracts many locals and tourists (Defensor, 2006). In that sense, food carts are now a common sight in most of the city centers in the Philippines where influx of people

is visible. More Filipinos get into this small type of enterprises because it only requires minimal capital, simple facilities and relatively simple skills to master. According to May et al. (2021), street foods are common even in affluent nations because they represent culture, diversity, and appeal, all of which boost travel and lead to economic progress. It improves the economic and national identity of the nation (Bellia et al., 2022). In addition, Chukuezi (2010) said that there is growing recognition that street food vending plays an fundamental socio-economic role in terms of employment potential, providing special income particularly for women and facility of food at affordable prices to mainly the lower income groups in the cities. Nonetheless, it is not anew to claim that food cart culture in the country disclose various issues on health and safety, underground economy, and waste management and disposal. A study on the microbiological load of street food and vendors' food hygiene and safety practices (Origenes, Espinosa-Gelisanga, & Alturas, 2022) revealed that food vendors in the study areas were very good at using protective clothing, having water available at the vending point, cleaning their fingernails, and using the proper kitchenware when serving food to customers. On the other hand, their adherence to obtaining a sanitary/health card, a business permission, and the use of a head covering is appalling. In contrast, based on the study of Tavonga, (2014) street food vending, became an alternative street economy and not merely a hindrance to progress and sustainable development.

Despite the issues concerning food cart culture, the purchasing power for street foods is still high for most of the crowd in the urban spaces. Viewing this phenomenon from the economic perspective would entail that demand for street food is relatively high. Basically, there are forces from the consumers why there is a high demand for street food in the urban areas. This assumption provides fascination for the researcher to explore the food cart economy in Kabankalan City which served as the locale for this research undertaking. Kabankalan City, is a 1st class and now became a component city of Negros Occidental. It is a progressive city and is the second most populous city in Negros Occidental next to Bacolod City. Remarkably, the rising trend of its population gave birth to various informal sector mainly street foods vending in the hearth of the city. This has been embedded in the food culture in the city where flocks of community people and tourist patronize every day.

From the general concept of utility, the researcher used Revealed Preference Theory introduced by Paul Samuelson in 1938. Revealed preference is an economic theory concerning an individual's consumption patterns, which stresses that the best way to measure consumer preferences is to observe their purchasing behaviour. The theory assumes that consumers are rational. In simple sense, consumers have considered a set of alternatives before making a purchasing decision that is best for them (Investopedia.com). Hence, given that a consumer chooses street food out of many other alternatives, this option must be the preferred option. From this economic theory, the researcher attempted to fill in the lacuna why street foods still preferred by many locals and tourist in urban spaces like in Kabankalan City. Likewise, it is also interesting to underscore the nature of the problems and impediments faced by the street food vendors in this type of enterprises. The information obtained can be used to make suggestions for policy recommendations to enable planning and development of safe and sustainable strategies of street food vending. Similarly, it can be used to design a framework to maximize the commercial benefits of street food vending as a cultural resource to improve the tourism industry.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to investigate how the food cart economy functions and to create an overview of some of the major important dynamics that shape the street food vending in Kabankalan City. Specifically, this study sought answer to the following questions:

1. What are the prevalent reasons of street foods vending in Kabankalan City?
2. What are the determinants of Street food from the perspective of street food vendors?
3. What are the problems faced by street food vendors?
4. What are the success stories of street food vendors?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Qualitative research deals with understanding human behaviour in a natural setting. It is naturalistic in nature because it studies human behaviour and the reasons that govern it (Denzin, & Lincoln, 2018). McMillan and Schumacher (1993) defined qualitative research as primary inductive process of organizing the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories. This definition implies that the data and meaning emerge organically from the research context. The emphasis of this study is to understand fully the complexity of street food vending and the ability of street food vendors to shape and create meaning on their experiences. Thus, This research undertaking employed narrative inquiry to have a full grasp of the research problem.

The purpose of this study is to narrate the situation of food cart economy in Kabankalan City through the experiences of street food vendors. Narrative Inquiry is the methodological perspective used in this study. Narrative Inquiry as a model is a way of understanding experiences. It is collaboration between researchers and the participants, overtime, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with their milieu. An inquirer enters the matrix in the midst and progresses in the same way, including the midst of living and telling, reliving and setting the stories that make up people's lives both individual and social. Simply stated, a narrative inquiry is stories lived and told (Clandinin and Connelly, 1991, in Arguelles et. al., 2010, p. 28).

Research Method

Considering the availability of the participants, individual in-depth interview was the method used in this study. Since, the possibility of gathering the participants in one place is not feasible due to time constraints, work conditions and individual considerations, the researcher decided to conduct individual interview as agreed by the participants. Thus the researcher utilized one-on-one interview with each of the participants. Gabler (2013) defined in-depth interview is a form of non-standard or semi-structured oral interview with a relatively large freedom of the interviewer in terms of content and design, which increase the willingness to provide information and the spontaneity of the participants should be higher.

This form of data collection is suitable because whole ideas as well as chains of argumentation were preserved. Also, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is approximately symmetrical, because the researcher tries to put himself into his participants, which can prove to be very insightful.

In conducting the interview, the researcher prepared the depth questionnaire with open-ended responses and pre-formulated questions as guide during the interview.

Research Locale



Figure 1. Map of Kabankalan City



Figure 2. Photo of the Research Site

The research locale of the study is in Kabankalan City, it is a 1st class and now became a component city of Negros Occidental. It is a progressive city and is the second most populous city in Negros Occidental next to Bacolod City. Remarkably, the rising trend of its population gave birth to various informal sector mainly street foods vending in the hearth of the city. This has been embedded in the food culture in the city where flocks of community people and tourist patronize every day. The selection of the locale is based on the researcher’s subjectivity wherein he is teaching in West Visayas State University-Himamaylan City Campus- the neighbouring city of Kabankalan City. Thus, feasibility of the research to conduct is foreseen by the researcher based on prevalence of street food in Kabankalan City rather than in Himamaylan City.

Participants of the study

The participants of the study were the five street food vendors in Kabankalan City. Four of them are females and only one male. The age is ranging from 26 to 56 years old and majority of them are married. The length of years being street food vendors is ranging between three to ten years. Only one participant is ten years as street food vendors. The food carts used are all rented and all of them are selling snacks and refreshments. It is interesting to underscore that almost all of them are women and are already into the business for several years as street food vendors. Their varying age is likewise observed as determinants of their length as street food vendors. In selecting the participants the following inclusion criteria were considered:

1. He/She must be a street food vendor in Kabankalan City for atleast 3 years.
2. He/She is a regular street vendor in the city (i.e. selling street food regularly).
3. He/She a resident of Kabankalan city.

Profile of the Participants						
Name	Sex	Age	Status	No. of years as street food vendor	Type of Food cart	Kinds Street Foods Sold
Waveya Aposaga	Female	42	Married	10 yrs.	Rented	<i>Snacks and Refreshments</i>
Teresa Ediezca	Female	56	Married	7 yrs.	Rented	<i>Snacks and Refreshments</i>
Jack Flores	Male	26	Single	5.5 yrs.	Rented	<i>Snacks and Refreshments</i>
Marigold Fernandez	Female	28	Married	3 years	Rented	<i>Snacks and Refreshments</i>
Regine Pines	Female	26	Married	5 years	Rented	<i>Snacks and Refreshments</i>

Sampling Procedure

In selecting the participants of the study, purposive sampling was utilized. Five street food vendors were purposively chosen to answer the research questions. Purposive sampling is technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information rich cases for the most effective use of the resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are specially knowledgeable about or experienced with phenomena of interest (Creswell and Creswell 2011) in addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive and reflective manner.

Research Instrument

To have a full grasp and deep understanding of the individual answers, the researcher conducted an in-depth interview. Thus, an interview guide was prepared. The interview guide was focused on the participants' thoughts, feelings, experiences, knowledge, ideas, and preferences that answered the problems in this study. With the consent of the participants, audio recording, and observation notes were utilized during the interview and transcripts of the utterances during the interview were secured. Likewise, the researcher's interview guide was submitted to three expert validators to secure the content and face validity of the interview questionnaire. Thus, validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what is supposed to measure and performs as it is designed to perform.

Validity of the study

To secure the validity of the study Member Checking was employed.

Member checking is known as participant's verification, informant feedback, respondent validation, applicability, external validity, and fittingness (Morse, Barret, Mayan, Olson, & Speirs, 2002). The researcher restated or summarized the information and then questions the participant to determine accuracy. The participants either agree or disagree that the summaries reflect their views, feelings, and experiences, and if accuracy and completeness are affirmed, then the study is said to have credibility.

Data Gathering Procedure

The participants had to turn in a consent form in order for the study to be approved. The letter offered an overview of the research issue, the study's objectives, and the rationale behind its conduct. Following agreement to the specified study criteria, the time, date, and location of the interview were set according to each participant's availability. The participants have decided that the interview will take place at a time that works best for them.

Additionally, before the interview, each participant received personal orientation that included information on what to expect from them, including the approximate duration of the interview. It was also explained in general terms the steps taken to ensure confidentiality and the consent form. The real interview was then conducted.

For the systematic gathering of the data the following measures were utilized:

Audio-visual documentation. It goes without saying that an audio-visual recording is necessary for a researcher to have a thorough collection of records. Interviews were used to obtain first-hand information for records. The information gathered was counter-validated using audio-recorded data. There is very little chance of information and records being distorted.

Transcription. It is described as a translation between data formats, most frequently used in qualitative research to translate audio recordings into text. It ought to align with the methodological and analytical goals of the study. The researchers meticulously transcribed the data to guarantee that the transcripts

accurately represented the written text. Following the initial reading, the researchers used to verify the transcription.

Data Analysis Procedure

To analyze the data gathered, narrative analysis was utilized. Narrative analysis is a way of inquiring into experiences through —collaboration between researchers and participants, overtime in place or series of places and in social interaction with milieus (Cladinin and Conelly, 2000). In this procedure, information are organized, connected, evaluated and constructed in the form of analysis.

After the in-depth analysis, similar answers of the participants were group together with the used of the Thematic Approach. Furthermore, according to Stirling (2001) Thematic Approach seek to unearth the themes, salient in the text at the different levels and thematic aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of different themes. Clearly, the process of drawing themes from textual data and illustrating these with some representational tool is well established in qualitative research.

The researcher was able to draw interpretations and consistent with the data that was collected. With the used of thematic approach the researcher was able to detect and identify the variables that influence data generated by the participants. This is well aligned with the features that are involved in the process of Thematic Analysis according to Hatch and Creswell (2002 and 2003 in Ibrahim, 2012).

For the systematic analysis of data the following data reduction were employed:

First phase for data reduction

After the data collected, the researcher tabulated it by using Microsoft word in preparing and organizing the content of the data. This meant that the data were ready to be analyzed word-by-word, using the tables to show any significant patterns or themes (Miles and Huberman 1994; Halldorson 2009). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argue that in Thematic Analysis, data „must be read at least twice (p.165) so that the researcher should —”*get a feel for the text by handling the data multiple times.*” (Ryan and Bernard 2003 p.11), regarding this issue, Bernard (2000) mentioned an ocular scan method, which he argued is one of the best ways for the researcher to hunt for themes and patterns in qualitative data (Attard and Coulson 2012 p.501; Kim 2008 p.12).

Reading the data a few times before and after identifying the themes and codes was proved beneficial for following reasons:

1. It allowed the researcher to appreciate the full picture and make connections between the participant’s thoughts, ideas and the data collected through observations.
2. Reading prior to starting analysis allowed the researcher to identify and have more time to evaluate the data so preventing precipitous conclusions.

Second Phase Data Reduction

In this phase the researcher highlighted the sentences from each participant that is used to answer the study’s question by taking excerpts from the participant’s full text. It has been advised that researcher should at all times keep an eye on the study’s questions during data collection and analysis (Halldorson, 2009), which will assist the researcher to identify accurately,, *excerpts*’ that relate to the research’s objectives. In addition, Ryan and Bernard (2003) said, “*We highly recommend pawing through texts and marking them up with different colored highlighter pens.*” (p.11) by that, therefore, all the data should highlighted to prepare it for the next phase.

Third Phase Data Reduction

In this phase the researcher used the highlighted sentences and broke these sentences into smaller

segments or themes. These segments or themes referred to the sentences of a paragraph. This established the first themes from the data. Subsequently, the researcher then, should to read the full content again in order to compare, contrast and search for missing information that had not appeared in the first level of the themes (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The data further developed under the first level of themes, which enabled the researcher to have better tabulation themes texts and saved it in a new Word document. This procedure made the themes clearer and more understandable in terms of the researcher's focus. The data was then prepared and ready for identifying and classifying the second level of themes. Before proceeding to the second level themes the researcher made the first level themes. The aim is to make sure that the excerpts from the first themes represented the whole text. The last phase is making the narratives for discussion. In this phase the researcher will prepare the narratives out of the themes emerges from the data gathered.

Ethical Considerations

In this study, the researcher guaranteed that the research undertaking must not pose any danger, embarrassment, hurt or may risk to the research participants. The information was collected from the participants without violating the rights of the sources of information. The participants' privacy must therefore be protected. In this connection, the researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study and was given the right to consent or refuse to participate in the study. Thus, consent form was prepared.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter contains the results and discussion of the study. Data analysis resulted into four major themes and two sub themes regarding street food vending which are all anchored to the research problems: The themes emerged in this study were: 1) The reasonable reasons, 2) every Juan wants, 3) when it rains, it cries, 3.a) eat and run, 4) welcoming income, 4.a) reaching the rich dreams.

(1) The Reasonable Reasons

Every person has to decide what is best for their life especially when it comes to earn a living. Based on the responses gathered from the street food vendors, they all have their reasons why they get involved into this kind of food cart culture in Kabankalan City. The five participants have different reasons why they became street food vendors. Their primary reasons are: Inherited knowledge from the parents, fast to earn money, to help the family, for everyday income, affordable and easy to sell.

1.1. Inherited knowledge from the parents. According to Waveya, she got to have this kind of living because she learned and inherit the business from their parents. In addition she added that it is the only thing she is knowledgeable about to do as it was started by her parents then. She said:

*“Ti kay amo lang na ang amon nabal an, halin pa s amon mga ginikanan bala haw.
Amo ni nga pangabuhian, ti amo man na ang*

ginsunod namun ehh.” (So, that's the only knowledge we from our parents. So this is the kind of living we followed).

1.2. Fast to earn money. Many would agree that lots of people especially Filipinos are fond of eating street food. Thus, several micro-business minded persons engaged into this kind of business because earning money is much faster knowing that all people consume food s to eat. One reason espouse by Teresa why she engaged in street food vending because based on her experience it is faster to earn money from this kind of business. She explained:

“Madasig ang kwarta amo gid na ang akun mahambal.” (Money is fast to earn, that's I can say).

1.3. To help the family. We live not alone, we strive for life not for our own sake but for the welfare and benefits of our family. According to the third participant, Jack, he wanted to help his family, and it

is his primary reason why he became a street food vendor. He noted that:

“Kay para ano man maka bulig man kami sa pamilya, maka negosyo negosyo tapos masadya

man ang plaza di nga may butang di nga street food, para maka kaon kaon man ang ga lagaw lagaw nga taho.” (In order to help our family, to have a mini-business and the plaza is lively if there is a street food to eat by the people roaming around).

1.4. For everyday income. Everyday income is necessary for those living in the margin. Marigold directly stated that, it is a means of their everyday survival, she needs to have income everyday to ensure their everyday expenses. She stated that:

“Para ano ehh, adlaw adlaw nga income.” (In order to have an everyday income).

1.5. Affordable and easy to sell. Regine, has an insightful idea when she observed that many students are roaming around in the afternoon in the plaza, and looking for something to eat and drink after a tiresome day in school. So she decided to try and put up a food cart for her street food business and she is now serving the students for five long years as street food vendor. She affirmed that:

“Ang street food daw dasig sa, dasig sa mga manogbakal, labi nagid estudyante mag puli kung hapon galagaw lagaw di sila sa plaza, ti amo na dasig ang baklanay sang street food kay daw barato guro.”(Street food is fast to sell especially to the students who are roaming every afternoon in the plaza, so the selling of street food is fast because it is also affordable.)

Every participant has their own reasons why they became street food vendor. Most of these reasons are driven by the desires of having business that could sustain their everyday living and earn income for the family. It was noted that the participants has no common reasons but the reasons are varied. Definitely their primary reasons were based on the idea that street food vending is a business that is easy to put up and sustainability is feasible because it needs minimal capital and basic skills to master. In fact Aquino; Pedalgo, Zafra, and Tuzon (2015) posited that entrepreneurs enter food and beverage business due to its income potentials. In addition, most of the participants are high school level and do not have a degree. Nevertheless, this kind of business does not need a higher degree and voluminous skills to master given the fact that most of the foods were easy to prepare. Thus, these kinds of foods are normally prepared through frying or heating only. As stated by Winarno and Allain, (1991) street food businesses are usually owned and operated by individuals or families. Street food enterprises are generally small in size; require relatively simple skills, basic facilities and small amounts of capital. Marketing success of the street food vendors depends exclusively on location and word-of-mouth promotion.

(2) Every Juan Wants

People in the Philippines are fond of eating street foods. This has been part of Filipino food culture that already found in almost all city spaces in the country. Among of the determinants or factors why it is enticing to the people were identified by the street food vendors from their own perspective. Thus, generally described as “everyone wants”

2.1. People’s Taste and preferences. One of the primary condition that customers look at a particular food is essentially based on their taste and preferences. The street food vendor viewed that people will not buy the food if the taste is not familiar or “in” to their own taste. The customers as well consider if the place is clean and comfortable to eat. Thus, their preferences are as well important. Teresa opened that:

“Ahhh, ano ehhh ang siling nila daw ano kuno ang street food.... Kung depende man bala sa taste sang taho kag may kabaratuhan. Kag instead makadto ka sa iba ang balaklan like sa mall, ti mahal ehh, pero kung sa amon di may kabaratuhan kag makasiling ang tawo nga baw ang amon gasto nga one hundred lang pero busog busog kana, pero kung didto sa iban ya sobra

sobra pa magasto mo indi makapabusog sa imo ang one hundred. Daw sa subong ya diri ya may komportable pa sila na kalan an, malimpyo man ang amon nga gina serve sa ila.”(Ahh, as they said street food...it depends on the taste of people and it is affordable. And instead they go to other place like malls, so it is expensive but in ours so it is affordable and the people can say that “wow our one hundred can make us very full but if you buy to others you can spend much and your one hundred cannot get you full. Now adays, in our they are comfortable to eat and we serve clean to them.)

There are a variety of reasons why people seek street food. As affirmed by Food and Agriculture Organisation (2005) these include ethnic tastes, nostalgia, the opportunity to eat quickly, as well as obtaining flavorful reasonably priced food in sociable settings. Considering the nature of street food vending, where the foods are readily prepared and serve instantly, the issue of hygiene and sanitation are sometimes compromised. Hence concerns of cleanliness and freshness often discourage some people from eating street food. With the increasing pace of globalisation and tourism, the safety of street food has become one of the major concerns of public health and a focus for governments and scientists to raise public awareness (FAO, 2007; Mukhola, (2007) as cited in Njaya (2014). Moreover, most of the dishes sold at Kabankalan City are more of traditional or familiar foods to the locals. Thus, the place is providing an opportunity for urban people to access traditional dishes, which have been to a greater extent replaced by western dishes in most homes. According to Henderson (1998) in the Western countries local communities are making extensive efforts to protect their endangered gastronomic traditions. Notably, it appears there is a trend in Kabankalan City, which is occurring either deliberate or not, to re-establish cultural food identity. Street food consumption seems to be enabling people to identify with their culture or to relive the past that is under threat from globalization. In addition, the environment provides an opportunity for patrons to re-live their past and re-unite with their local foods.

2.2. Fast and Affordable. The people to buy particular goods because of prices. Low and affordable prices could attract customers to patronize the product. Aside from taste and preferences, the price is one of the contributory conditions why people buy street foods. Nevertheless, the preparation is as well fast and easy.

Jack said that:

“Mga ano, dasig mabakal kay barato, especially ang kwek kwek . Kay siyempre damo naga lagaw lagaw nga taho di, ti ang iban ga kaon kaon gid. “(It is fast to sell because its affordable especially the kwek-kwek. Because of course theres many people in here, so the other are really eating.)

This finding concur with those of a study carried out by Mensah, Yeboah-Manu, Owusu-Darka, and Abblodey (2002) in where it was established that those customers of street foods save considerable amounts of money by eating in the streets, especially regarding traditional dishes. Likewise, affordable prices entice many people to patronize street foods. This was supported by Arámbulo, Almeida, Cuéllar, Belotto (1994) affirming that the inexpensive to moderate prices attract consumers to the street eating spots.

2.3. For gastronomic needs. Definitely, people would buy food if they are hungry. Empty stomach would always find something that could satisfy its craving. One best way to response to it is to offer something fast, affordable, easy to prepare but delicious snacks.

Regine responded that:

“Siguro sa ila guro, siyempre daw because gutom sila guro ehh. Kag amo na nagabakal di sila kalan on, kag siguro man amo na guro maka pa ano na? satisfied sa ila kag barato nga balaklon eh.” (Of course for them, they are hungry. That’s why they buy here something to it, and maybe that can satisfy them and it is affordable.)

Marigold further noted that:

“Siguro kay gutom sila, para may makaon kaon samtang naga lagaw lagaw. “(Maybe, they are hungry, so they are eating while roaming around.)

All people eat, and foods are the basic need to satisfy the hungry stomach. That is why many people ventured into food business, because it offers stomach satisfaction. Most of the participants agreed that people tend to buy street food just to satisfy their gastronomic needs. They aired out that primary motive that drove people to demand for food is because they are hungry and to try instant foods not usually prepared at home. This was clarified by Charity, Clotildah, Tüisetso, Patrick, Enoch (2015) that in their study patrons mentioned that they preferred unrefined foods which are free from additives. They also expressed satisfaction with the use of traditional cooking methods such as the use of fire and earth-made pots.

(3) When it rains it cries

Weather in the Philippines is unpredictable. Following the weather season, food cart business is dependent on weather conditions. Most of the participants aired that their major and common problem is the rainy weather. They reasoned out that if it rains, there is little people buying their foods. Likewise, it is difficult for them to do the chores because its wet. Waveya said that:

“Budlayan gid kami kung ga ulan, wala gawa benta. Damo man nga mga problema nag agi eh pero nakaya man nmun lampas an ahhh.” (We find it hard when it rains, because we have little income. Theres many problems that we faced but we surprised it.)

Teresa also said that:

‘Ahhh ang ulan man eh amo gid na ya basa gid di, mabudlay mag giho kung ga ulan kag wala gawa tawo.’(Ahh, also the rain, it really wet, and it its difficult for us to do the chores, and also theres little people to buy.)

Regine affirmed that:

“Siyempre kung ulan wala gid sing mayo di nga gabakal eh kay ti ang estudyante indi maka lagaw lagaw kag ang iban ang taho, tapos damo gid bilin nga pagkaon kay wala sang may gabakal.” (Of course, if it rains, only few people who buy, so the students and other people cannot go around, so there are many leftover foods because no one is buying).

The common problem encountered by the participants is the rainy weather. According to them this hampers their regular operation and even lower down their income in barest minimum. This findings supported by Schuurmans (2016) stated that times get difficult in the rainy season, since when it rains, most people do not want to come and eat outside. Surprisingly, none of the participants mentioned about problems in the business operation such as government intervention or friction with other vendors. Thus, this would attest that they have good operation in the city and they have adequate support from the local government.

(3.1) Eat and Run

Aside from the weather problem, another challenges experienced by the street food vendor is the run away customer. One participant detailed that there customer that will eat and then go without paying the order. In some instance that there are many customers ordering, the vendors sometimes failed to notice that the others are not paying and just go unnoticed. Jack explained that:

“Kis a ang problema, ginadalaganan kami iban wala naga bayad nga cutomer, may mga salawayon gid daan.” (Sometimes the problem is the customers do not pay, they just eat and run, there are really customers who are bad.)

The foregoing response offered bad experience with some of the clever customers. One participant mentioned that he has encountered instances that he was not paid by the customer and just run away. This instance was also raised by Schuurmans (2016) affirmed that sometimes people order and eat their foods and walk away without paying and this often happens on the busiest days when the vendor is busy preparing foods and entertaining other customers.

(4) Welcoming Income

One of the essential reasons why many people venture into business is to earn a living and have income for everyday expenses. It was already espoused that the primary reasons of street food vending is for income purposes. Perhaps, many people would say that street food vending is a small earning business, and perchance labelled mainly as business of the poor. When the participants were asked about their success stories as street food vendors surprisingly they uttered that earning large income from their small business is already a big success for them. They noted that this success usually attributes to the big events celebrated in the city where flocks of people both local and tourist are visible. Waveya said that:

“Hmmm, abaw daw ka dalom.... Siguro kung may mga okasyon di sa plaza, parehas sang sinulog, charter, anniversary na amo na siya dako gid na nga kadalag an para sa amun.” (wow, it’s a kind deep, maybe if there are occasions here in plaza like sinulog, charter, and anniversary, so that is a big success for us.)

Jack also noted that:

“Hmmm , siguro makabig namon nga kadalag an, kung may mga okasyon, dako dako gid amon income damo gid amon mabaligya, ti dako man mabulig sa amon nga pamilya eh.” (Hmmm, I think, the thing we consider a success is if there are occasions, it’s a very big income and we can sell many, so it helped a lot for our family).

It seems that participants were overwhelmed with the income they earned in street food vending making this a significant moment of their life stories that they earn more than they expect. Nonetheless considered it as their success in life. Street food is a significant part of urban food consumption for millions of low and middle-income consumers in urban areas on a daily basis Aquino; Pedalgo, Zafra, and Tuzon (2015). There is increasing recognition that street food vending plays an important socio-economic role in terms of employment potential, providing special income particularly for women and provision of food at affordable costs to mainly the lower income groups in the cities (Chukuezi, 2010). McGee (1973) as cited in Nirathron, (2006) classified street food vending into three types according to the location of vendors. Firstly, there are those who sell from street pavements. Secondly, some of the vendors sell at places where people assemble. Thirdly, there are those who sell in a bazaar. A bazaar is equivalent to a seasonal or periodic market, where vendors sell from a piece of public or private land. He further noted that the ubiquitous nature of street food indicates that these activities are responding to real societal needs. As a result, one can infer that the high prevalence of the informal food is an indication that the formal food industry is failing to fully cater for the needs of some of the urban population. Low income urban populations depend more heavily on street food as a source of relatively in-expensive foods Tinker (1997). However, studies carried out by IFPRI, (2010) indicated that people of different economic profiles consume street food.

(4.1) Reaching the rich dreams

Many would agree that we are working hard to reach our dreams. Reaching our dreams is a metamorphical process that requires a lot of dedication and hard work and more perseverance. Somehow, dreams are achieved through economic success which definitely be done through business. Street food vending is a micro-scale business that does not need large amount of capital to put up but it could bring the owner to greater heights if properly manage and monitored. Responses from the street food vendors attest their success stories. Through the business they gradually reach their dreams for their family. In fact Teresa disclosed that:

“Mga kadalag an namon ngaaah... ang amon handom bilang steet food vendor sa amon pamilya nalab-ot namun, naka bakal kami sang amun nga motor, daw ka name lang gid lang, daw padugang lang gid sang amun kinahanglanon kag napanami man namun ang amun panimalay.”
 (So our success is, we reach our dreams for our family as streetfood vendor, we had bought motorcycle, so it’s a nice feeling, it also added to our needs and we beautified our home.)

Everyone is dreaming for good and comfortable life for the family. Participants eagerly pronounced that they are proud of their business because it helped the family a lot. It provides their needs and even made them save for future used. In addition, they were able to buy things for the family and make their home beautiful. This might be simple achievement for others but it is a big success in the eyes of a street food vendors. Findings in the study of Schuurmans (2016) noted that street food vendors are happy to have this job, despite the long working hours, because it provides their family with a place to live and good food. Also he further affirmed that street food vendors used their income to take care of their family and to save some money to invest in the bank. However, most of the money they earns goes back into the business, as investments (ibid).

Problems/ General Themes	Reasons (The Reasonable Reasons)	Determinants (Every Juan Wants)	Challenges	Successes
Sub-themes	Inherited knowledge form the parents	People’s taste and preferences	When It Rains, It Cries	Welcoming Income
	Fast to earn money	Fast and affordable	Eat and Run	Reaching the Rich Dreams
	To help the family	For gastronomic needs		
	For everyday income			
	Affordable and easy to sell			

Figure 1. *Summary of Results*

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn.

There are variety of reasons of street food vending. In the case of street food vendors in Kabankalan City, their reasons are very practical and mainly based on their own knowledge about the business. Perhaps, it was conceptualized through observation and technical know how about the set up. Definitely, they cannot venture into this kind of business if they lack knowledge and skills in food preparation. As mentioned in various literatures, the food preparation for street food vending is very easy and manageable through observation. In addition, they started the business probably because it only needs small capital to invest. In fact, most of them started in raw materials, and small amount of money. They are only renting the cart but they were able to expand it through the years as most of the participants were already into this business for quite long years. Thus, it can be concluded that this kind of business is ventured by desire for income and sustained by patience and perseverance of the vendors.

It can be surmised that street food vending attracts an increasing number of people in all walks of life from the locals to the tourists. Likewise there is a growing niche market for traditionally related foods, which became the source of income for many locals. Hence selling this kind of foods may foster cultural identity, social interaction among the people in the city. Likewise the determinants of street food vending are mainly due to the taste and preferences of the customers and most importantly the affordable

prices it offers to the masses. It's good to underscore that the local government recognizes the existence of street food vending sector in the City, whose potential to become a competitive and viable economic activity is undisputed because of the availability of a growing market. In fact, street food vending is serving a clientele- the masses, whose needs are not being fully met by the formal hospitality industry which offers high prices and not readily accessible to the people. Moreover, there are no external impediments in the set-up and operation of street food vending in the city therefore the tourism industry supports this kind of business. Probably, the local government unit and the tourism industry have felt mutual benefits from this sector which helped the economic activity to grow and foster in Kabankalan City.

Lastly, the success stories of the street food vendors would attest that success is very simple. Earning a living for the comfort of family is the genuine success for them. Their meaning of success is very simple yet realistic and practical. Nonetheless, success are not always visible in the naked eyes, and it does not reside in the glittering jewels and expensive material possessions but in the attitude of being humble and content in the kind of life that one has.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and subsequent conclusions, the following recommendations were advanced:

- 1) Street food vendors may strengthen their capacities and skills through training in food handling, and business information so as to enhance their health sanitation and productivity. Also to ensure that they follow the required rules for proper hygiene and sanitation. Likewise it is recommended that they may give attention to the use of indigenous ingredients when preparing different dishes, and improving food service to satisfy more customers in order to promote the food culture and identity of the city. This will able to attract more people from various socio- economic backgrounds which will eventually foster economic growth in the city. Further, street food vendors may create their own association that would represent their voice in a formalize manner. They might link their associations to the other well organised associations which can help them to develop and improve their businesses.
- 2) The city council may provide essential public utilities such as potable water, garbage collection, electricity and public toilets for the street food vendors. This will entail creating a supportive space and clean environment for the people and tourist. In addition, formalisation through legislation of vending on the streets would be easier for the vendors to operate while working within the existing regulatory framework. The regulations maybe designed equitably and vendor license fees or renting charged should be sustainable so that vendors are able to stay within the regulatory period.
- 3) The Local Government Unit may identify public spaces and give them to vendors and the City planning department should coordinate with the other agencies to secure and organize formal places for street food vendors in the city.
- 4) Non-governmental organizations may design on the job training seminars for street vendors on issues of capacity building, marketing skills, business development and hygiene in the production of safe food.

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