High School Students' Consumer Behavior and Market Perceptions toward Street Food: A Case Study in Central Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract
This study examines high school students' consumption behavior and perceptions toward street food in central Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). Price, flavor, food safety, nutrition, social influence, and convenience are some of the major factors influencing students' choices of street food, and the study examines these elements using a structured online questionnaire that was given to 260 students (234 valid responses). Microsoft Excel 2016 and IBM SPSS Statistics (version 31) were used to perform descriptive statistics and chi-square testing. The findings show that the most important elements influencing consumption behavior are taste (M = 4.38) and convenience (M = 4.12), with social media trends (M = 2.78) and nutrition (M = 2.97) having the least impact. The majority of students spend between 20,000 and 100,000 VND daily on street food and primarily consume it one to two times per week. Chi-square analysis shows that none of the independent variables have a significant impact on purchase location ($p > 0.05$), although spending allocation is significantly associated with social media trends ($p = 0.001$) and moderately with nutrition ($p = 0.083$) and referrals ($p = 0.084$). These data show that students' street food consumption is predominantly motivated by sensory gratification and peer-related social engagement, rather than health or trend-based considerations. The study offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and small vendors looking to promote healthier but appealing street food options for teenagers in urban Vietnam.

Keywords: High School Student; Street Food; Students' Food Consumption Behavior; Students' Perceptions; Ho Chi Minh City.

Abbreviation:
HCMC Ho Chi Minh City

1. Introduction

1.1 Current Backgrounds

Most countries in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, are famous for their large variety of affordable street foods (Samapundo et al., 2016). Similarly, food products that save time and effort in preparation, consumption, or cleanup are omnipresent. Many people's lifestyles today have led to a great demand for such convenience food products (Brunner et al., 2010). In recent years, the demand for street foods in Asia has increased due to rapid urbanization and its

associated social and structural changes (Jayasuriya, 1994), especially in major urban areas, including Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). Around high schools, numerous small-scale food and beverage businesses have emerged to meet students' growing demand for quick and accessible meals. However, current studies on convenient food consumption have predominantly focused on adults or university students, while high school students remain an understudied demographic.

In addition, the sale of street foods supports the livelihoods of millions of the urban poor and can make a sizable contribution to the economies of developing countries (Samapundo et al., 2016). Specifically, the food consumption behavior of high school students is a social phenomenon worthy of greater academic attention. This age group not only represents a key consumer segment but also directly influences the business operations of vendors located near school zones. In other words, many small-scale food businesses rely on student customers to sustain and operate. Moreover, students' food choices may impact their health, spending habits, and long-term consumer behaviors.

1.1.1. Significance

Despite extensive research on consumer behavior and food spending habits, a notable research gap remains concerning the specific dynamics of food spending habits among students (Rasid et al., 2023). Current research has yet to investigate the relationship between high school students' consumption patterns of convenient food and the business models of small food and beverage vendors. This also reveals a gap in the intersection between school-based economics and adolescent consumer behavior in the Vietnamese context.

1.1.2. Reasons for choosing the topic

The lack of clarity regarding this relationship may hinder local vendors from understanding market trends and adapting their strategies accordingly, potentially leading to inefficient business practices. Since adolescents represent a large share of the population in low- and middle-income countries and since eating habits are known to track from adolescents into childhood (Kelder, Perry, Klepp, & Lytle, 1994), unhealthy or unregulated food consumption behaviors among high school students could also have adverse effects on their well-being and future dietary habits.

For these reasons, with the current landscape and significance of the study, we choose to conduct research under the title: "High School Students' Consumption Behavior and Perceptions toward Street Food: A Case Study in Central Ho Chi Minh City." This research aims to analyze high school students' perceptions and consumption behavior regarding street food, and potentially identify their effects on the operations of small food services located in urban school areas.

1.2 Research objectives

1.2.1. General objective

The primary objective of this study is to examine high school students' consumption behavior toward Street Food.

1.2.2. Specific objectives

- Determining the common types of street food that most high school students in HCMC consume.
- Analyzing the influence of students' perceptions regarding the taste, price, hygiene, and nutrition of street food on their consumption.
- Analyzing the street food consumption frequency and preferred purchasing locations of high school students.
- Identifying key factors driving the popularity of street foods among high school students, including lifestyle, socio-economic background, social media trends, and peer, parents/guardians' influence.

1.3 Research Questions

A. What are the common types of street food consumed by high school students in central Ho Chi Minh City?
B. What are the perceptions of high school students regarding the taste, price, hygiene, and nutrition of street food?
C. Where and how frequently do high school students consume street food?
D. Are there any significant differences in consumption behavior based on students' socio-economic background, media trends, peer influence, and parents/guardians' influence?

1.4 Research Scopes

1.4.1. Research subjects

High school students, within the age range of 15–18 years, who are studying in public high schools located in central HCMC.

1.4.2. Research scopes

1.4.2.1.Spatial scope

The spatial scope of this research encompasses selected high schools in central districts of Ho Chi Minh City (e.g., District 1 (Sai Gon Ward), District 3 (Ban Co Ward), District 5 (An Dong Ward), Phu Nhuan District (Phu Nhuan Ward), Binh Thanh District (Gia Dinh Ward), Tan Binh District (Tan Binh Ward),...), where students have higher exposure to street foods outlets, fast food chains, and modern street foods businesses.

1.4.2.2. Temporal scope

The temporal scope of this research will focus on the current trends and consumption patterns of street foods among high school students, as well as recent adjustments in the business models of street food establishments in response to these trends.

1.5. Definitions of Related Terms

1.5.1. Street Food

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 1995), the definition of street food is: “Street foods are ready-to-eat foods and beverages prepared and/or sold by vendors or hawkers especially in the streets and other similar places.” Street foods represent a significant part of daily urban food consumption for millions of low- and middle-income consumers in urban areas (Privitera & Nesci, 2015).

Street food can be defined as a variety of low-cost, ready-to-eat food and beverage items that are typically prepared and sold by small vendors or mobile stalls situated in public spaces such as sidewalks, marketplaces, and particularly areas surrounding school zones. In the context of high school students in Vietnam, street food serves as a practical and accessible dietary choice that aligns with their daily study schedules, financial limitations, and peer-oriented social behaviors.

Due to the segmented structure of the Vietnamese school day (often divided into morning and afternoon sessions), students frequently encounter time constraints that make returning home for traditional family meals inconvenient. As a result, many opt to purchase food from nearby street vendors during break periods. This practice not only addresses the need for a quick and affordable source of food but also fits a social pattern: students often dine together in informal, outdoor settings. The portable nature and minimal cost of these food items further contribute to their popularity among this demographic.

Common examples of street food consumed by high school students include *xiên que nướng* (grilled skewers), *bánh tráng trộn* (rice paper salad), *cá viên chiên* (fried fish balls), instant noodle cups, sweet snacks, and a variety of iced beverages. While these items offer convenience and enjoyment, their frequent consumption has raised public health concerns related to nutritional adequacy, food safety, and long-term well-being.

In sum, within the Vietnamese high school student context, street food represents more than a dietary preference; it is a culturally embedded and socially significant practice shaped by necessity, economic considerations, and lifestyles.

1.5.2. Consumption Behavior

Consumption behavior, also known as consumer buying behavior, is the process by which individuals and groups choose, purchase, use, and dispose of goods and services to satisfy their needs and wants (Solomon, M., 1995). According to Solomon (2004), there are four different types of consumers' activities:

- Consumption as an experience (emotive or aesthetic reaction to product consumption),
- Consumption as an instrument of integration (usage and consumption of the product integrates us somehow into society),
- Consumption as a classification scale (choice of products influences the way we are perceived by our environment and how we are ranked in society),
- Consumption as a game.

In the context of high school students in Vietnam, consumption behavior can be observed in the way they choose and consume food, particularly during school breaks. Their choices are influenced by limited budgets, peer influence, convenience, taste preferences, and time constraints. Students' consumption behavior reveals how external environments (location of vendors, prices, etc) and internal motivations (hunger, habit, etc) drive their decisions.

1.5.3 Perceptions

Perception means the adaptation of reality. The process of selection, processing, and interpretation of input data from the environment to make them purposeful (Brown, 2006). As Brown (2006) states, it is "the adaptation of reality" — meaning individuals do not necessarily respond to objective reality, but rather to how they perceive it. This involves several cognitive steps:

- Selection: filtering stimuli based on relevance or personal interest,
- Organization: structuring selected stimuli into coherent patterns,
- Interpretation: assigning meaning based on previous experiences, beliefs, or cultural context.

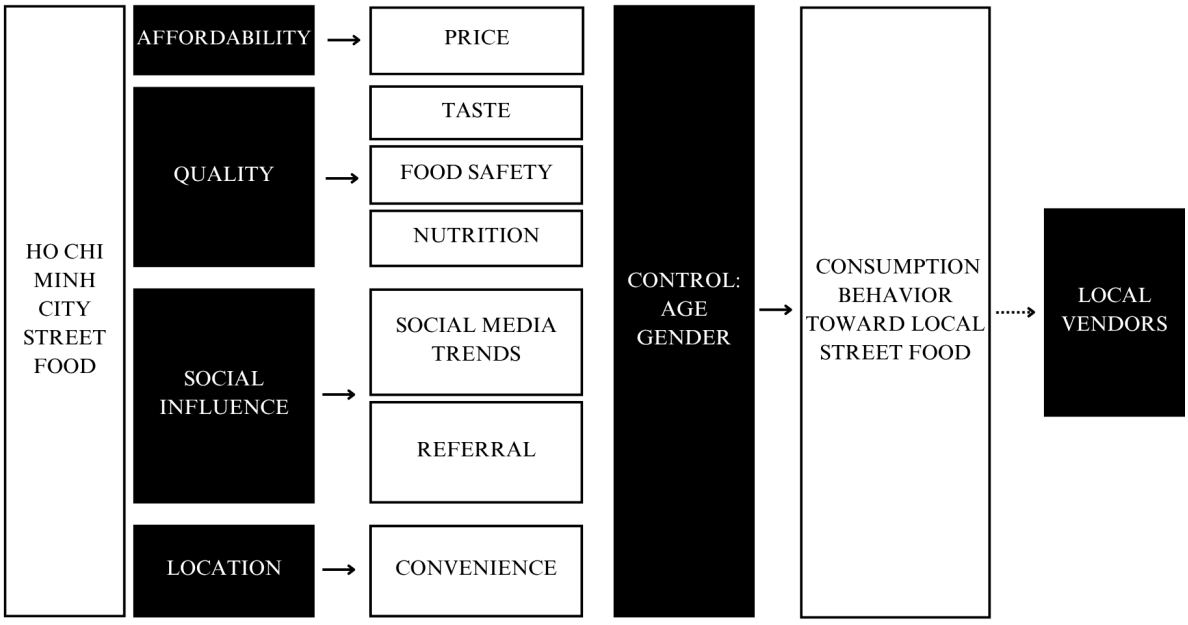
Perception is influenced by a range of factors, including personal background, socioeconomic status, cultural upbringing, peer influence, and media exposure. Thus, even when individuals are exposed to the same object or situation, their perceptions can differ significantly depending on these contextual factors.

In the case of Vietnamese high school students, perception plays a central role in shaping their attitudes and behaviors toward street food consumption. These students might perceive street food as:

- Convenient and time-saving, especially in between school sessions or after extracurricular activities.
- Affordable, compared to home-cooked or restaurant meals, which aligns with their limited daily allowance.
- Socially engaging, as eating street food with friends after school is a common social activity.
- Trendy and desirable, due to online food reviews, social media trends, or peer recommendations.

However, perceptions can also include negative associations, such as concerns about hygiene, food safety, or nutritional value, which may influence students' decision-making processes. Understanding the perception of Vietnamese high school students toward street food, therefore, helps researchers and policy-makers identify what drives their consumption behavior, and how health, education, or food safety campaigns can be better designed to match these perceived realities.

1.6. Theoretical Framework



2. Research Hypotheses

The increasing consumption of street food by high school students in central Ho Chi Minh City has a significant influence on the adaptation and evolution of street food business models, including pricing strategies, location decisions, and menu choices.

- High school students in central Ho Chi Minh City prefer street food that reflects Southern Vietnamese tastes and suits their budget.
- High school students in central Ho Chi Minh City have more favorable perceptions of the taste and price of street food than of its hygiene.
- High school students in central Ho Chi Minh City frequently consume street food as part of their daily routine, mostly from local vendors.
- There are significant differences in students' street food consumption behavior based on their socio-economic background, media trends, peer influence, and the influence of their parents or guardians.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sampling method: This research applied both quantitative (survey distribution) methods to examine high school students' consumer behavior and perceptions of street food in central Ho Chi Minh City, and qualitative (in-depth interviews) methods to examine those of local business owners.

3.2. Sampling size: 260 respondents

All responses were collected voluntarily over a set period. The sample reflects a cross-section of grade levels, genders, and personal background information.

3.3. Participants' characteristics:

- The number of students who filled out the form: 260
- The number of filtered students who filled out the form: 234

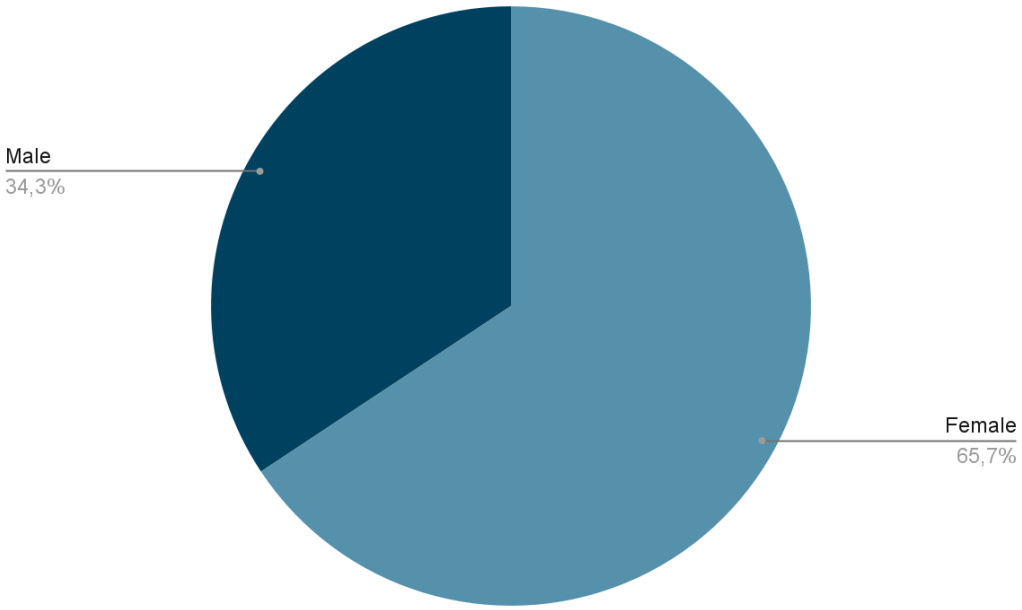


Table 1. Gender distribution of the survey

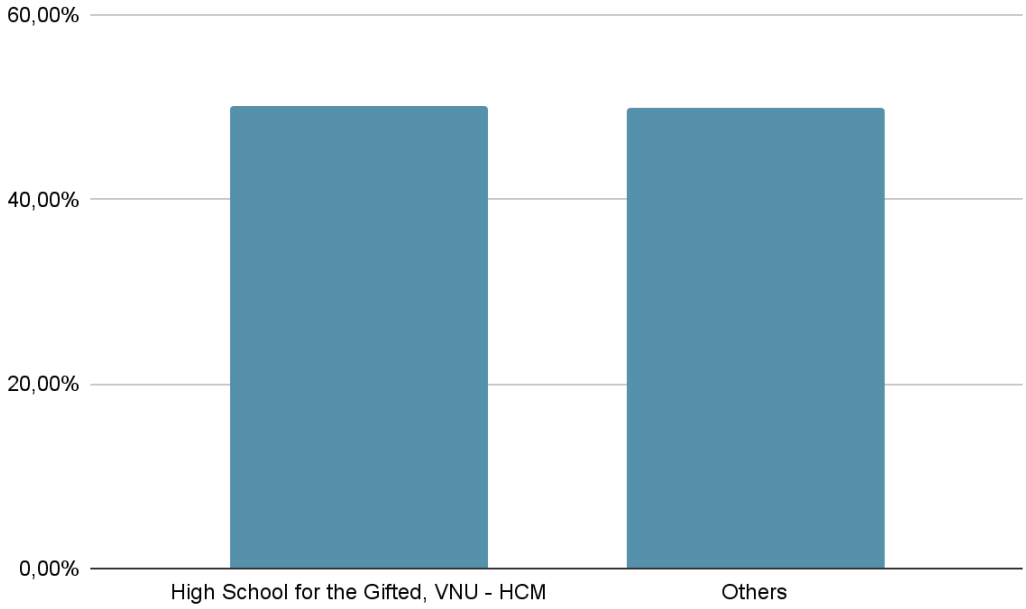


Table 2. Percentage of schools with participating students in the survey

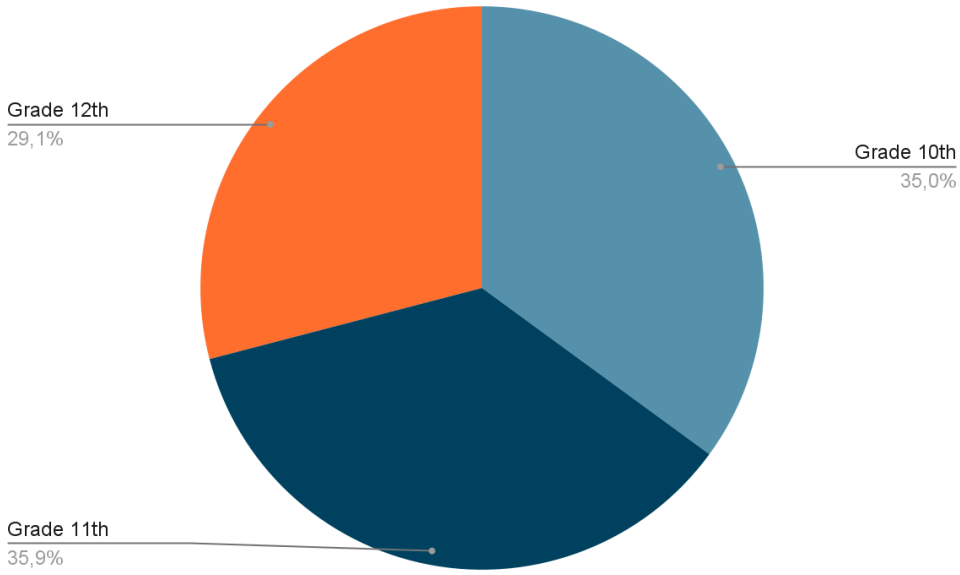


Table 3. Percentage of grades represented in the survey

3.4. Research Procedure

3.4.1. Data collection tool: Structured online survey and face-to-face interview

The questionnaire included multiple-choice questions based on the Likert scale (1-5) to explore high school students' perceptions of the hygiene, price, and taste of street food, their frequency of street food consumption, and the factors influencing their buying behaviors. A free-response question was included in the questionnaire to gather additional insights into the consuming patterns of high school students. In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a selected group of students and business owners to gain deeper qualitative insights into their motivations, personal experiences, and attitudes toward street food. These interviews also helped clarify and expand on trends observed in the questionnaire data. Moreover, both the questionnaire and the interview identified whether there are significant differences in consumption behavior based on students' socio-economic background, peer influence, and lifestyles.

3.4.2. Data Management: All responses were stored in the IBM SPSS Statistics (version 31) application for main trend identification and other descriptive characteristics. Further tests on relationships between variables were conducted in Microsoft Excel 2016.

3.5. Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analyses were processed and analyzed with IBM SPSS Statistics (version 31). Inferential analyses were processed and analyzed with Microsoft Excel 2016.

- Reliability analysis:

Cronbach's Alpha was used to analyze the internal consistency of the survey constructs, specifically those linked to students' opinions of street food. Items with low item-total correlations were removed to verify the reliability of the measurement scales.

- Descriptive analysis:

Data from variables A, B, C, E, and F were reported as frequencies and respective percentages using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 31).

- Chi-square test of Independence

Each of the seven factors from the D group (price, taste, food safety, nutrition, social media trends, referrals, convenience) was examined for its relationship with two independent variables: students' choice of street food purchasing location and students' spending allocation for street food.

Included tests with $p < 0.05$ were deemed important in assessing relationships between independent variables and dependent variables.

2. Results

2.1. Street Food Preference and Consumption Frequency

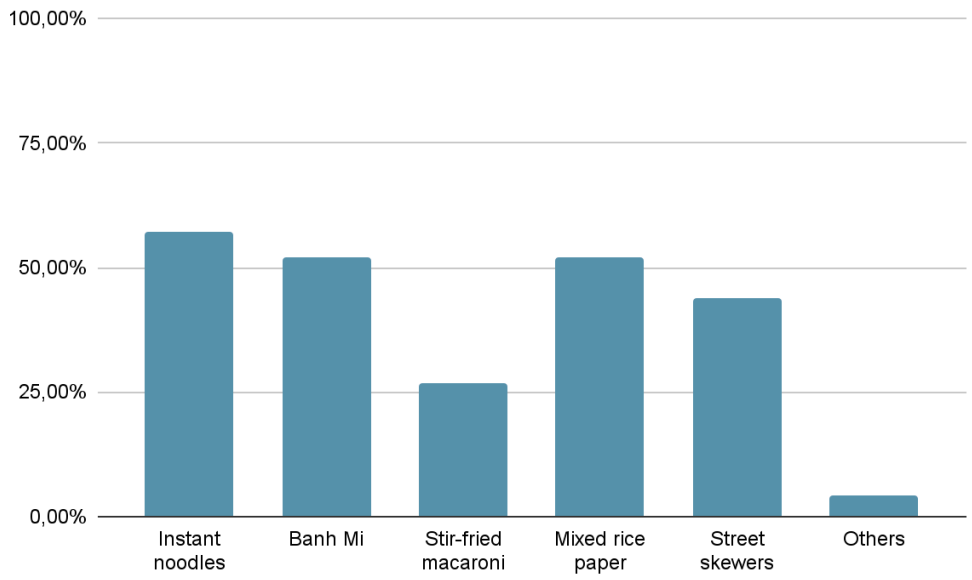


Table 4.1. Percentage of frequently consumed food

Over 234 surveyed students, 57,3% frequently consumed instant noodles, making it the most commonly consumed type of food. Banh Mi and mixed rice paper have an equal percentage of 52.1% each, followed by Street skewers with 44% and Stir-fried macaroni with 26,9%. Only 4.2% preferred other foods, accounting for the lowest rate overall. For instance, N.T.N. (Female, 11th grade, High School for the Gifted, VNU-HCM) states, “I frequently eat ice cream and sweet cakes.”

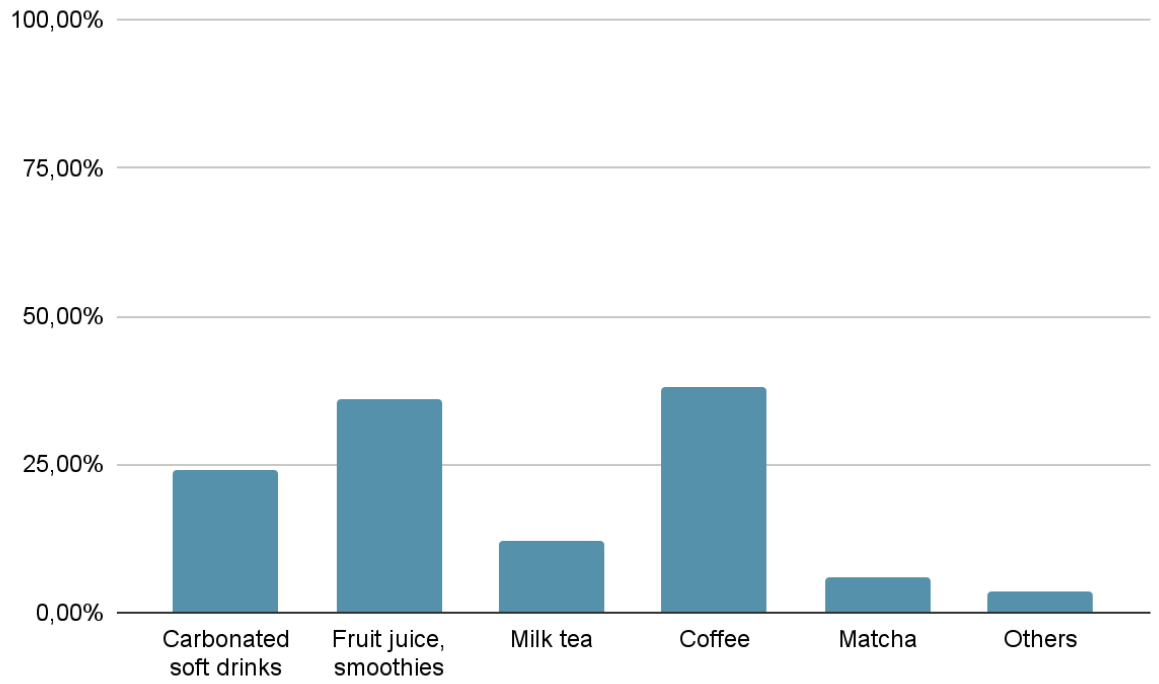


Table 4.2. Percentage of frequently consumed beverages

Over 234 surveyed students, coffee is the most frequently consumed beverage, at 38%, followed by fruit juice and smoothies, at 36%, and carbonated soft drinks, at 24%. The minority of students regularly consumed milk tea (12%), matcha (5,9%), and other beverages.

	Frequency	Percent (%)	Valid Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	6	2,6	2,6	2,6
1-2 times	127	54,3	54,3	56,8
3-4 times	64	27,4	27,4	84,2
4-5 times	19	8,1	8,1	92,3

Over 5 times	18	7,7	7,7	100
Total	234	100	100	

Table 5. Consuming frequency

Of the 234 surveyed students, the majority consume street food once or twice a week. 27.4% of students consume street food three to four times a week, while only 8.1% consume it over five times a week, and 10.3% never consume it. According to M.H.Q.V (Male, 12th grade, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai High School), he frequently eats street food in the morning before classes.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Price is the most important factor	234	1	5	3,83	,983
Taste is the most important factor	234	1	5	4,83	,877
Food Safety is the most important factor	234	1	5	3,97	1,062
Nutrition is the most important factor	234	1	5	2,97	1,161
Referral is the most important factor	234	1	5	3,18	1,168
Convenience is the most important factor	234	1	5	4,12	,966
Social Media Trend is the most important factor	234	1	5	2,78	1,339
Valid N (listwise)	234				

Table 6. Preferences of students when buying street food.

The respondents' perceptions toward factors influencing street food consumption varied, all rated on a five-point Likert scale. Among these factors, taste stood out as the most influential determinant, with the highest mean score of 4.38, playing a dominant role in students' purchasing decisions. This was followed by Convenience (M = 4.12), Food Safety and Hygiene (M = 3.97), Price (M = 3.83), and Referral (M = 3.18), suggesting that accessibility, safety, affordability, and social influence are also relevant considerations.

Conversely, Nutrition (M = 2.97) and Social Media Trends (M = 2.78) received the lowest ratings, indicating that health awareness and online popularity have minimal influence on

students' street food consumption behavior. Overall, these results reveal that students tend to prioritize taste satisfaction and practicality over nutritional or trend-driven motivations when purchasing street food.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.829	0.830	5

Table 7.1. Reliability Statistics of the E-group

The internal consistency of these items was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value greater than 0.7, confirming that the data are reliable and consistent in measuring students' perceptions of commonly consumed street food.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Good Taste	234	1	5	4,36	,926
Cleanliness	234	1	5	3,79	,956
Reasonable Price	234	1	5	4,09	,940
Good Quality	234	1	5	3,96	,957
Large Portion	234	1	5	3,69	,998
Valid N (listwise)	234				

Table 7.2. Descriptive Statistics of the E-group

The mean scores ranged from 3.69 to 4.36, indicating generally positive evaluations. Among these, taste/flavor received the highest mean score (M = 4.36, SD = 0.93), suggesting that the majority of respondents find the street food they consume to be suitable for their personal taste preferences. Reasonable price (M = 4.09, SD = 0.94) and good quality (M = 3.96, SD = 0.96) followed closely, reflecting students' overall satisfaction with affordability and quality assurance. In contrast, cleanliness (M = 3.79, SD = 0.96) and portion size (M = 3.69, SD = 1.00) were rated lower, implying moderate but not full satisfaction in terms of hygiene and serving quantity. Overall, these findings suggest that students' satisfaction with street food primarily stems from taste and affordability, while hygiene and portion size remain areas for potential improvement.

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items

0.801	0.802	5

Table 8.1. Reliability Statistics of the F-group

The reliability test for these items produced a high Cronbach's Alpha value, confirming that the data are internally consistent and reliable in evaluating students' behavioral tendencies toward street food consumption.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Go with a friend	234	1	5	3,84	1,133
Order online with a friend	234	1	5	3,52	1,223
Crave it	234	1	5	3,82	1,100
Have extra money	234	1	5	3,43	1,207
Treat my friends	234	1	5	3,34	1,143
Valid N (listwise)	234				

Table 8.2. Descriptive Statistics of F-group

Descriptive statistics show that all mean values fall within the 3.34 to 3.84 range, indicating that students are generally likely to purchase street food across multiple scenarios. The two strongest motivators are "going with a friend" (M = 3.84, SD = 1.13) and "craving it" (M = 3.82, SD = 1.10), suggesting that social interaction and personal desire play the most significant roles in influencing students' purchasing behavior. Meanwhile, factors such as ordering online with friends (M = 3.52, SD = 1.22), having extra money (M = 3.43, SD = 1.21), and treating friends (M = 3.34, SD = 1.14) scored slightly lower but still above the neutral midpoint, showing moderate influence.

Overall, these results indicate that street food consumption among high school students is primarily socially driven, with companionship and craving serving as the strongest triggers for purchase decisions.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 20.000 VND	38	16,2	16,2	16,2
20.000 VND - 50.000 VND	106	45,3	45,3	61,5
50.000 VND - below	64	27,4	27,4	88,9

100.000 VND				
100.000 VND - below 150.000 VND	18	7,7	7,7	96,6
Over 150.000 VND	8	3,4	3,4	100
Total	234	100	100	

Table 9. Allocation to street food

The data reveal that the majority of respondents (45.3%) spend between VND 20,000 and VND 50,000 per day on street food. This is followed by 27.4% who spend between VND 50,000 and under VND 100,000, indicating that a substantial portion of high school students allocate a moderate amount of their daily budget to this category. Additionally, 16.2% of respondents reported spending below VND 20,000, while only 11.1% spent over VND 100,000 (including 7.7% between VND 100,000–150,000 and 3.4% above VND 150,000).

Overall, these findings suggest that street food consumption among high school students remains affordable and within a low to moderate spending range, with most expenditures concentrated between VND 20,000 and VND 100,000 per day. This pattern reflects both the accessibility and price competitiveness of street food options available to students in central Ho Chi Minh City.

9.3. Location and Allocation Decisions by Influencing Factors

p-value		**Independent Variables**						
		Price	**Taste**	**Food Safety**	**Nutrition**	**Trends**	**Referral**	**Convenience**
Dependent Variables	**Location (n=625)**	0.756	0.969	0.871	0.159	0.960	0.798	0.772
	Allocation (n=234)	0.434	0.172	0.302	0.083	0.001	0.084	0.461

Table 10. p-values obtained from Chi-square tests

Table 8 presents the p-values obtained from Chi-square tests examining the association between high school students' perceptions of key influencing factors (price, taste, food safety, nutrition, trends, referral, and convenience) and two dependent variables: street food purchasing location (n = 625) and spending allocation for street food (n = 234).

The results show that none of the independent variables have a statistically significant relationship with students' choice of purchasing location (all $p > 0.05$). However, regarding spending allocation, significant associations were found with social media trends ($p = 0.001$), and marginally significant relationships were observed with nutrition ($p = 0.083$) and referral from friends or relatives ($p = 0.084$). These findings suggest that students' budget decisions toward street food may be influenced by online trends and social factors, while their choice of where to purchase street food appears relatively unaffected by these variables.

4. Discussion

This study's findings offer insights into the consumption habits of urban Vietnamese high school students, as well as the implications for health education and local business practices.

4.1. Dominance of Taste and Convenience

The analysis revealed that flavor and convenience are the primary factors influencing students' food choices. This aligns with earlier research (Brunner et al., 2010; Samapundo et al., 2016), which shows that young people tend to prioritize taste and accessibility over nutritional value or hygiene. The average ratings for flavor ($M = 4.38$) and convenience ($M = 4.12$) indicate that students prefer food options suitable for their busy schedules. This reflects the Vietnamese preference for delicious food as well as the practical demands of students' busy academic lives. For instance, D.T.G., a female vendor of mobile Banh Mi, notes that "customers often enjoy the flavor of the food because it is convenient and affordable." Likewise, D.T.T., a male vendor at a fixed fast food location, points out that "customers generally focus most on product quality and the attitude of the service."

4.2. Moderate Awareness of Hygiene and Quality

Although food safety and quality received positive ratings ($M = 3.97$ and $M = 3.96$, respectively), they were not considered key factors. This suggests that while students acknowledge the importance of hygiene, they often prioritize enjoyment and convenience instead. These results are consistent with the findings of Privitera & Nesci (2015), which indicated that students might still choose to eat street food despite concerns about cleanliness, as long as other aspects like flavor or cost are appealing. This attitude can have significant health risks because frequent exposure to unsafe food conditions may weaken hygiene practices among young people.

4.3. Limited Influence of Nutrition and Trends

Nutrition and social media trends received the lowest ratings ($M = 2.97$ and 2.78, respectively). This reflects a broader trend among adolescents who prioritize enjoyment and social interaction

over health when it comes to eating. Despite the high online engagement of Vietnamese youth, the limited influence of social media trends ($p = 0.001$ for spending but not for location) suggests that digital factors mainly affect how much students spend rather than where they choose to eat. This implies that while online food information may promote consumption, accessibility, and personal preferences are still the key factors in decision-making. D.T.T. also noted: “My best-selling items were simple, filling foods such as sandwiches or quick meals, and students rarely ask about nutrition or health benefits.” This supports the idea that taste and convenience outweigh nutritional knowledge in actual buying behavior.

4.4. Social Interaction as a Key Motivator

The behavioral data (F-group) indicates that students tend to buy street food more often when they are with friends ($M = 3.84$) or when they have a personal craving ($M = 3.82$). This supports the notion that food consumption is a social activity (Solomon, 1995), fulfilling emotional and social needs. Sharing meals after school not only fosters social connections but also highlights the impact of peer groups on purchase frequency and spending habits.

4.5. Spending Patterns and Socioeconomic Implications

Most respondents (72.7%) spend between 20,000 and 100,000 VND daily on street food, which aligns with the minimal allowances of high school students. This data highlights street food as a convenient and affordable option compared to restaurant meals, underscoring its economic importance for both students and local vendors. Additionally, the significant impact of social media and referrals on spending ($p = 0.001$ and $p = 0.084$, respectively) suggests that recommendations from peers or online exposure can indirectly affect financial choices, even if location preferences remain unchanged. D.T.G. mentioned, “I sell around 30 - 40 sandwiches per day,” while D.T.T. noted, “I sell about 100 drinks and 70–80 meals daily.” These numbers reflect the crucial and consistent role of affordable street food in fulfilling students' daily needs and supporting local small businesses.

5. Strengths and Limitations

This research provides valuable information about the street food consumption patterns of high school students in central Ho Chi Minh City, a group that hasn't been extensively studied. The study involved surveying 234 students from various schools to collect genuine and varied insights on their daily spending, purchasing reasons, and influencing variables. The high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ($\alpha = 0.829$ and $\alpha = 0.801$) indicate that reliable measurement tools were used, which improves the internal consistency and reliability of the data collected. Additionally, the use of descriptive statistics alongside significance testing allows for a comprehensive and analytical understanding of consumption behavior.

Despite these strengths, certain restrictions must be addressed.

First, the statistical analysis indicates that most variables have non-significant p-values, suggesting that the factors examined (such as price, hygiene, taste, convenience, and trend) do not completely account for students' consumption behavior. This points to the possibility of other unmeasured factors, like emotional state, peer influence, or food accessibility, which might play a more significant role in influencing purchasing decisions.

Second, the composition of the sample may affect the generalizability of the results. Approximately 50% of the responses came from the High School for the Gifted, VNU-HCM (PTNK), while the other half came from different schools. This uneven distribution could introduce bias related to the schools, as students from PTNK might differ from those in other schools in terms of socioeconomic status, academic workload, and exposure to urban street food.

Third, there is a gender imbalance in the dataset. As shown in Table 1, female respondents represent 65.7% of the sample, while males account for 34.3%. Previous research suggests that female students tend to have a greater awareness of food safety and more cautious consumption habits compared to males. This skewed representation could affect the findings, as gender-specific behaviors may have influenced the overall averages and reduced the accuracy of the broader conclusions.

Finally, since this study relies solely on self-reported survey data, participants' answers may be affected by recall bias or the desire to present themselves favorably. Future research should consider using observational data to capture the behavioral subtleties that quantitative surveys might not effectively convey.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Conclusion

High school students in central Ho Chi Minh City show a strong preference for tasty, affordable, and conveniently accessible street food. Their spending habits, typically ranging from 20,000 to under 100,000 VND per day, demonstrate modest but steady demand, emphasizing the economic relevance of the informal food market among adolescents. The study effectively captures varied behavioral patterns and perspectives using a comprehensive dataset, which is supported by statistically reliable measures such as Cronbach's Alpha values of more than 0.8, ensuring consistency in responses across variables.

However, certain limits must be noted. The sample composition was unequal, with roughly 50% of respondents coming from the High School for the Gifted (VNU-HCM) and the rest from other schools, which may restrict the findings' generalizability across different educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, the gender distribution was substantially skewed toward female respondents (65.7%), which could influence perception-based variables like hygiene and social consumption patterns. While chi-square analyses found few statistically significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables, this suggests that other factors, such as personal lifestyle, parental influence, or exposure to digital media, may also influence students' consumption decisions.

6.2. Recommendation for Students and Business Owners

6.2.1. For Students

- Develop healthy eating habits: While taste and convenience are the most influential considerations (M = 4.38 and M = 4.12), students should also consider nutritional balance when purchasing street food.

- Practice moderation and budgeting: Most students spend 20,000-100,000 VND each day on street food. By setting a budget, they can better manage their finances and avoid impulsive purchases driven by social situations or cravings.

- Increase food safety awareness: Since students rated food cleanliness (M = 3.79) lower than taste and price, they should be cautious when buying from vendors with questionable hygiene.

- Utilize social influence: Peer pressure plays a significant role in eating habits (M = 3.84 when eating with friends). Students can utilize that to support healthier and more responsible eating habits among their peers.

- Balance enjoyment and responsibility: Balance enjoyment and responsibility: Street food is an integral part of teenage culture and social life. Students should enjoy it as a communal experience while being mindful of hygiene, nutrition, and their spending habits.

6.2.2. For Street Food Business Owners

- Prioritize taste and hygiene: Because taste (M = 4.38) and cleanliness (M = 3.79) are among the most important purchasing factors, vendors can remain competitive by providing delicious yet hygienic products.

- Provide economical options: Since students are highly price-sensitive (M = 3.83) and most spend less than 100,000 VND per day, businesses should prioritize affordability without compromising quality. Providing combo meals or student discounts could help attract their interest.

- Promote convenience and accessibility: Convenience (M = 4.12) is an important factor. Vendors near schools should offer quick service, simple packaging, and efficient payment options (e.g., mobile payments) to accommodate students' time constraints.

- Diversify menu and nutritional value: Vendors should consider adding healthier options, such as grilled items instead of fried ones, fresh fruit beverages, or low-sugar choices, to appeal to health-conscious students and their parents.

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8. Appendix

8.1. Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

A. What street food dish do you consume most often? (Multiple Choice)
Instant noodles
Vietnamese sandwich (Bánh mì)
Stir-fried macaroni
Mixed rice paper
Street skewers
Other

B. What street beverage do you consume most often? (Multiple Choice)
Carbonated soft drinks
Fruit juice, smoothies
Milk tea
Coffee
Smoothies

Matcha
Other

C. On average, how many times per week do you eat street food?
0 times
1–2 times
3–4 times
4–5 times
More than 5 times

D.1. Price is the most important factor in purchasing street food: Assessing the affordability of high school students regarding the price of street food.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

D.2. Taste is the most important factor in purchasing street food: Assessing the satisfaction of high school students regarding the taste of street food.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

D.3. Food Safety is the most important factor in purchasing street food: Assessing the concerns of high school students regarding the hygiene and safety of street food.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

D.4. Nutrition is the most important factor in purchasing street food: Assessing the awareness of high school students regarding the nutritional value of street food.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4

Strongly Agree = 5

D.5. Social Media Trend is the most important factor in purchasing street food: Assessing the influence of viral trends and online platforms on high school students' street food purchasing decisions.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

D.6. Referral (from Friends and Relatives) is the most important factor in purchasing street food: Assessing the influence of social networks on high school students' street food purchasing decisions.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

D.7. Convenience is the most important factor in purchasing street food: Assessing the impact of accessibility and speed on high school students' street food purchasing decisions.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

E.1 The street food I usually eat is suitable for my taste
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

E.2: The street food I usually eat is clean
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4

Strongly Agree = 5

E.3: The street food I usually eat is reasonably priced
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

E.4: The street food I usually eat has good quality.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

E.5: The street food I usually eat has large portions.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

F.1: I will go buy street food when I go with a friend
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

F.2: I will go buy street food when I order online with a friend.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

F.3: I will go buy street food when I crave it.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2

Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

F.4: I will go buy street food when I have extra money.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

F.5: I will go buy street food when I treat my friends.
Strongly Disagree = 1
Disagree = 2
Neutral = 3
Agree = 4
Strongly Agree = 5

8.2. Appendix B: Interview Transcript Sample

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT NO. 1

Interview date: 26/08/2025
Time: 9 a.m.–11 a.m.
Interview method: Online phone call
Full name: M.H.Q.V
Grade: 12
School: Marie Curie High School (Xuan Hoa Ward)
Gender: Male

1. Common types of street food that students often consume.

QUESTION: Hi V, are you free? Can we talk for a bit?
ANSWER: I'm free, what do you want to ask?

QUESTION: Can you tell me about some street food dishes you eat most often? Why do you choose those dishes?
ANSWER: I often eat grilled meat skewers the most. I choose this dish because it really suits my taste.

QUESTION: Is there any street food that you like but rarely eat? Why?
ANSWER: I like fried fish balls but rarely eat them because I can't find any shop that has the same taste as the one I used to eat before.

2. Awareness of taste, price, and hygiene

QUESTION: How do you usually evaluate the taste of street food? What makes it different from homemade food or restaurant food?
ANSWER: I think most street food suits my taste. The difference is that it feels more "dusty" and "street-like," or in other words, it can be "dirtier" than food from big restaurants.

QUESTION: Have you ever noticed big differences in quality between shops selling the same dish?
ANSWER: I don't have enough experience to conclude there's a big difference between shops.

QUESTION: What do you think about food safety and hygiene at street food stalls? Do you have any memorable positive or negative experiences?
ANSWER: I rarely see any concerning issues about food safety and hygiene at street food stalls.

QUESTION: When you see a surprisingly cheap price, do you worry about the quality or hygiene?
ANSWER: Yes, I'll be worried when the price is too cheap because I'm afraid it might affect the quality or hygiene of the food.

QUESTION: When choosing a dish, do you pay more attention to taste, price, or other factors?
ANSWER: I pay attention to the price first, then consider other factors.

QUESTION: Do you think the price of street food is "worth" the quality?
ANSWER: I think sometimes the price is not worth the quality, there are times I regret buying it.

3. Frequency and places of consumption

QUESTION: When do you usually eat street food during the day?
ANSWER: I usually eat it in the morning before going to school.

QUESTION: Are there times when you eat more than usual?
ANSWER: In the evening, I usually eat more than usual.

QUESTION: Which stalls or vendors do you usually choose to eat at?
ANSWER: I usually choose familiar regular stalls.

4. Differences in consumer behavior according to personal context

QUESTION: Do you think family background affects your choice of street food?
ANSWER: I think it doesn't affect much. I just adjust my food choices to fit the amount of pocket money I'm given.

QUESTION: When you're with friends, do you eat more or choose different dishes?
ANSWER: Not much different, each of us just eats our own portion.

QUESTION: Do you often buy food following social media trends (TikTok, Instagram…)?
ANSWER: No, I don't care about eating according to trends.

QUESTION: Have you ever skipped buying street food to save money for something else?
ANSWER: Yes, when I want to buy something else, I'll save the food money.

QUESTION: Besides eating, do you think street food plays any other role in students' lives?
ANSWER: I don't think it plays a big role. When hanging out with friends, we can sit anywhere, not necessarily at a street food stall.

8.3. Data Tables

8.4. IBM SPSS Reliability Statistics and Descriptive Statistics Sample

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,829	,830	5

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Hợp khẩu vị	234	1	5	4,36	,926
Sạch sẽ	234	1	5	3,79	,956
Giá cả hợp lý	234	1	5	4,09	,940
Chất lượng tốt	234	1	5	3,96	,957
Khẩu phần nhiều	234	1	5	3,69	,998
Valid N (listwise)	234				