

## Street Eats and City Streets: A NYC Case with Global Implications

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### ABSTRACT

This case study examines the challenges faced by New York City's street food vendors, particularly those selling "Halal" food, focusing on regulatory, competitive, and operational hurdles. Through a qualitative exploratory research design, it reviews secondary data from scholarly articles, industry reports, and online sources to offer a comprehensive view of the street vending landscape. The study also adopts a global perspective, comparing NYC's experience with street food management in cities like Singapore, Mumbai, and London. Key issues addressed include complex regulations, competition with brick-and-mortar businesses, and public space constraints. The study highlights the transformative role of emerging technologies such as mobile payments and delivery apps in street vendors' operations. Conclusions emphasize the need for clear, fair regulations and collaborative efforts between vendors and city authorities. This research contributes to scholarship on urban economies and informal markets, offers vendors guidance on navigating regulatory challenges, and provides policymakers with strategies for fostering a sustainable and vibrant street food culture.

**Keywords:** New York City, Halal Food Carts, Street Food, Regulation, Vendors, Global.

**JEL Classification Code:** M38; K23

*"Street food is about capturing the essence of a place, and about showcasing the creativity and spirit of its people."* —Roy Choi

## INTRODUCTION

### The Business Case

Street food vending is not just a hallmark of New York City (NYC) but a common feature in cities around the world. From the structured hawker centers of Singapore to the informal vendors of Mumbai, metropolises globally are

grappling with how to integrate vibrant street food culture within modern urban landscapes. This case is about the challenges vendors and regulators face in streamlining the NYC street food vending, highlights challenges that are also seen in other global cities, offering a comparative lens to understand how different regulatory frameworks and urban designs impact street food vendors and the public.

In her article for *The New York Times* (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/18/dining/halal-cart-food-vendor-new-york-city.html>), Tejal Rao captures a snapshot of Kabir Ahmed's life as a New York City, Halal food vendor. Ahmed, 46, immigrated from Bangladesh 23 years ago and now runs a halal food cart near the World Trade Center, selling chicken and rice year-round. Like many of more than 10,000 immigrant vendors in the city, his business is an essential part of New York's culture and daily routines. However, vendors like Ahmed face numerous challenges, including complex city regulations, hefty fines for minor infractions (such as positioning their carts just inches off the allowed mark), and tensions with nearby businesses. Add to that the demands of working long hours outdoors, standing in unpredictable weather without proper shelter, and managing the fluctuating flow of foot traffic. "Everything is hard," Ahmed says, highlighting the difficulty of sustaining this type of work long-term as he ages.

From the standpoint of the city, there is a need to regulate the street food business, due to explosive growth of vendors, in terms of utilization of public spaces, pedestrian traffic, licensing, food safety and hygiene, after hours cart removals, quality control, and sales tax collection. On the other hand, from the perspective of the vendors, vendors must cope with changing city regulations, competition, customer needs, cart servicing, reliability of suppliers, cash, or credit transactions, paying sales tax, and having a union to represent them in the city council. All these stances are discussed and reviewed on how they are currently being addressed, and what needs to be done in addition, for a win-win situation for both the city and the street food vendors. Also, the shifts in consumer food preferences, business environment, emerging information technology, use of mobile devices and apps, and availability of third-party food delivery services are changing the landscape of food retail, are discussed. In addition, we also peek at some of the other large metropolitan cities such as Singapore, Mumbai, London, Dubai, Tokyo, Sydney, and Cairo, on how they address the challenges of vendors interest and city's space, safety, traffic, and hygiene management.

## **The City of New York**

The city of New York, often called New York City (NYC) or the “Big Apple”, is the most populous city in the United States. As of 2024, the overall population of the wider metro area stands at approximately 19.57 million, reflecting a slight year-over-year decrease according to Macrotrends. New York City remains the most populous city within the state, with a 2024 population of 8,097,282. Distributed over a land area of about 302.6 square miles, NYC is also the most densely populated major city in the United States. The city has been described as the cultural, financial, and media capital of the world, and exerts a significant impact upon commerce, entertainment, education, politics, tourism, art, fashion, and sports. New York City consists of five boroughs, Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, The Bronx, and Staten Island, each state county. As many as 800 languages are spoken in New York, making it the most linguistically diverse city in the world. New York City is home to more than 3.2 million residents born outside the United States, with the largest foreign-born population of any city in the world. In 2023, the New York metropolitan area produced a gross metropolitan product (GMP) of US\$1.78 trillion. If greater New York City were a sovereign state, it would have the 12th highest GDP in the world ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_York\\_City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City)). Many districts and landmarks in New York City are well known, with the city receiving a record 62.2 million tourists in 2023. Manhattan hosts several of the world’s most-visited tourist attractions such as Times Square, Central Park, Grand Central Terminal, Brooklyn Bridge, Empire State Building, Freedom Tower, Rockefeller Center, the Museums of Natural History, Art, and a Hall of Science. The borough also houses New York City Hall (the seat of the city’s government), NY stock exchange, and numerous well-known colleges and universities.

## **Street Food Carts in NYC**

With millions of people living, working, or visiting the Manhattan district daily, this bustling area of the city offers plentiful eating options, ranging from expensive gourmet restaurants to family diners, fast food retail chains, as well as inexpensive street food carts. Traditionally food carts selling hot dogs, burgers or pretzels have been a common sight for several decades on the streets of NYC, prior to the 1990’s. But in past few years there has been a spurt of food carts selling a fusion of American, Mexican, Mediterranean, and South Asian cuisine. Today, thousands of these carts dot the streets of Manhattan selling items such as Gyro, Kati Roll, Philly Steak Sandwich, Chicken-Over-Rice,

Chicken Wings, Biryani, Fries, Samosa, Dosa, etc., to name a few including the carts that sell traditional hot dogs, pretzels, sweet and salted nuts, juice, beverages, and ice cream.

Several of the current “Halal” (permissible meat for Muslims) food carts in the city are inspired by the success of “The Halal Guys”. The establishment, which now has a multi-city chain of restaurants, was founded in 1990 by an Egyptian descendent Mohamed Abouelenein, along with compatriots Ahmed Elsaka and Abdelbaset Elsayed, as a hot dog cart located on 53rd Street and Sixth Avenue in NYC. Abouelenein, however, believed that a hot dog was not a satisfying meal, and switched to the current menu of chicken, gyro meat, rice, and pita in 1992. As a result, New York City’s Muslim cab drivers flocked to the cart for its ability to provide a quick, relatively inexpensive, and filling halal meal. As word of the cart spread via these chatty cabbies, the now-famous platter of chicken over-rice was born and popularized within the Muslim community in the city. These carts caused a decline in the popularity of hot dog vendors in New York City and influenced many imitation carts. The food sold through these carts became so popular that on October 28, 2006, a fight that started in a queue line ended with 23-year-old Ziad Tayeh stabbing and killing 19-year-old Tyrone Gibbons. Tayeh was later found not guilty, as the jury found that he acted in self-defense. The fight began after one accused the other of cutting the line of a Halal food cart.

Many of the cart owners who claim to be selling “Halal” meat items, do not openly carry or display any verifiable certification for the same, and their claim is certainly questionable for at least some items they sell, such as Nathan Hot Dogs, which is not a Halal brand of dogs. Perhaps the responsibility and liability of the “Halal” claim lies with the vendor and not with the customer, who is trusting in the blanket posted claim. Most of the food fare these carts sell is common across them, but the prices vary depending upon the vendor’s own individual pricing based on the time, nearby competition, and location of their vending in the city. However, everyone can agree that one can have a decent meal for less than \$10, including a snack, entrée, and a drink, with an incredible flavor and portion size, in a megapolis like NYC, even today. These food carts provide an inexpensive food alternative to hungry visitors and the floating population of thousands of office workers, particularly during the daytime, in the city (See Appendices for pictures of the city, carts, sample items, etc.). A typical “Halal” cart owner in NYC would be a first-generation male Muslim immigrant to the US, who has either had none or less prior

experience in food vending through a concession cart, and most likely comes from Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Jordan, Pakistan, or Bangladesh (Refer 2018. Dick M. Carpenter II Street Vendor Data Set).

The next section provides a business overview, street vending business overview with an internal situation analysis that reviews the setting up of street food cart vending business, followed by the external situation analysis that looks at the overall business environment that includes competitive, regulatory, socio-cultural, economic, and demographic scenarios in the city.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Street vending has garnered significant scholarly attention worldwide, exploring its implications for urban planning, economic development, and cultural identity. For instance, Singapore's hawker centers exemplify a government-regulated model designed to maintain hygiene and food safety standards, while Mumbai's vendors often operate under informal governance structures, highlighting the diversity of regulatory environments (Cohen, 2019; Sim, 2018). Such comparative studies reveal that cities across the globe face similar challenges in balancing economic inclusion with public safety and sanitation (Bromley, 2000; Cross, 2000). Understanding these global practices offers valuable insights into how New York City might refine its approach to street vending.

Carpenter II (2018) defines street vending as “the retail or wholesale trading of goods and services in streets and other related public axes such as alleyways, avenues and boulevards” (Bromley, 2000, p. 1). Vending can occur at fixed locations or be mobile, utilizing carts, tricycles, or motor vehicles. This activity can be undertaken full-time, part-time, seasonally, or occasionally by various business types, including micro-enterprises, family businesses, franchises, and wage workers associated with brick-and-mortar firms (Bromley, 2000; De Castro, 2017). Historically, street vending has primarily been a livelihood for recent immigrants and those on the lower rungs of the economic ladder (Bluestone, 1991; Newman & Burnett, 2013).

Although street vending experienced a decline in the 20th century (Cross, 2000), the first few decades of the 21st century saw a significant resurgence in the industry. The 2012 Economic Census reported that food vendors generated revenues of approximately \$660 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Recent estimates indicate that street food vending in the United States now generates

revenues exceeding one billion dollars annually (Intel, 2020). In fact, in 2024, the street food vendor industry in the United States is projected to generate approximately \$3.9 billion in annual revenue, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 12.3%. This represents significant growth compared to the \$660 million reported in the 2012 Economic Census. John T. Edge, a food columnist for the New York Times, famously declared in 2010 that “Street food is hip” (Allen, 2010). A 2009 article in the Washington Post observed that “Street carts are the year’s hottest food trend,” noting that good, affordable food fulfills appetites during economic downturns while low start-up costs attract entrepreneurs (Black, 2009).

Several past studies suggest that street food contributes significantly to urban economies by providing accessible food options and creating jobs (Dudley, 2017; Hwang, 2021). This economic impact is particularly vital in urban centers, where street food can help alleviate food deserts and offer diverse culinary experiences (Rosenthal, 2022). By examining these global trends and local dynamics, this literature review underscores the need for effective policies that support street vendors while ensuring public safety and urban order.

## **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

This case study follows a qualitative exploratory research design, aiming to provide in-depth insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by street food vendors in New York City. It draws on a variety of secondary data sources, including published scholarly articles, industry reports, and news articles, along with online resources such as government regulations and vendor organizations. This approach allows for a broad understanding of the socio-economic and regulatory landscape impacting street food vendors, particularly in relation to urban governance and economic inclusion.

The qualitative methodology is particularly well-suited to explore complex issues like regulation, public space management, and informal economies. Data were gathered from peer-reviewed journal articles, published case studies, and city reports relevant to street vending in major cities, focusing on regulatory frameworks, vendor challenges, and urban planning strategies. Comparative analysis was used to assess how different global metropolises—such as Singapore, Mumbai, and London—address the same issues New York City vendors face. This global perspective offers a well-rounded view of urban street food vending dynamics.

## CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This case study is grounded in several conceptual and theoretical frameworks that help explain the dynamics between street food vendors and urban governance.

***Informal Economy Theory:*** Street food vending is often part of the informal economy, defined by Bromley (2000) as economic activities that operate outside of formal regulatory frameworks but contribute significantly to urban economies. Vendors, particularly in developing cities like Mumbai and Cairo, navigate both informal and formal economies, with many relying on community-based networks to sustain their livelihoods (Cross, 2000). This theory helps contextualize how street vendors in New York and other cities survive despite legal and regulatory challenges.

***Porter's Five Forces Model:*** Michael Porter's (1980) Five Forces Model, commonly applied in business strategy, is used to analyze the competitive environment of street vendors. Key forces include bargaining power of buyers (high due to consumer choices), threat of substitution (restaurants and other food services), and competitive rivalry among vendors offering similar products. This model is applicable in understanding how vendors differentiate themselves in a highly saturated market like NYC (Grundy, 2006).

***Regulatory Governance Theory:*** Regulatory governance examines the role of government in balancing economic activity with public safety and order. In cities like New York, the regulatory framework encompasses licensing, health inspections, and spatial limitations, aimed at controlling public space usage and ensuring safety. This theory is useful in analyzing how cities like Singapore have successfully implemented structured systems like hawker centers, which integrate public health and economic objectives.

***Urban Planning and Public Space Management:*** Street food vending occupies public spaces, raising concerns about urban congestion, safety, and equitable space usage. Theories of urban governance and public space management emphasize the role of planning in accommodating economic activities like street vending while maintaining public order. The global comparison of cities like London, Sydney, and Tokyo in this study shows how different models of urban space allocation can be implemented to balance these interests (Ehrenfeucht, 2016).

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

### Street Food Cart Vending Business (Internal Situation Analysis)

***Setting Up Food Cart Business and Marketing Plan:*** To start a food cart vending, a person needs to organize the following: *First* thing needed is the

license; one just cannot drive and set-up a cart wherever in the city. There are various requirements, including health department certificates, food inspection, equipment requirements, safety and sanitation requirement, truck/cart permits, and following the parking restrictions. New York City, for example, puts a cap on the number of food cart permits that they will issue. If they're maxed out, you'll be on a long waiting list since some permits don't expire for 15 years. Alternatively, one can purchase a permit on the black market that could cost up to \$30,000 or more. Some communities don't allow food carts or trucks to park in public spaces; you'll have to find private parking with access to a crowded area, which is a difficult task. *Second*, once the permit is gained, a prospective vendor needs to plan for a towable food cart that can range between \$2,000 for a used cart up to \$10,000 for a new one depending upon the make, size, accessories, and quality of materials used to build the cart. Perhaps a used cart may be a cheaper option to go with initially. *Third*, a vendor needs to either find a niche or follow the leader in terms of what menu of food items he or she wants to sell. *Fourth*, the most important factor in retail is location, the potential vendor must decide on where to place the cart for business, unless the permit is location specific. *Fifth*, a tentative marketing plan in terms of (7 P's since it is a service business) of marketing should be worked out to decide on the offerings, their prices, promotion (picture display), placement (location), professional attire and branding, process (taking orders, payment, and fulfillment), and of course dealing with customers in a most friendly way to make them feel important and their business appreciated. *Finally*, the main costs to focus on is the choice of raw or partially processed food items (such as breads, meat, veggies), drinks, condiments, take away packaging, and disposable serving materials.

***Financing the Business:*** Once a business plan is in place and all the fixed and variable costs are worked out, one needs to look at the total cost of investment; how much of it can be self-financed and how much it needs to be financed through a bank. Most of the banks or financial institutions would ask for a written business plan, profile of the owners, their credit report, a fixed percentage of their own investment, and guarantees, before a business loan can be approved. Many lending institutions would require insurance payments to be included and part of monthly mortgage payments if the loan is approved. A prospective street food retailer can find an appropriate business/cart insurance plan through an agent, or the lending institution can recommend available options through them.



***Deciding on a Business Strategy:*** Since most of these street food carts are selling the same food fare with almost identical product offerings, a vendor can create a competitive advantage with pricing, portions, or service quality, rather than be able to create it with unique selling proposition, also called *cost leadership strategy*. On the other hand, a vendor can command a price premium if he offers some unique food items or innovative offerings that are not generally available with other food cart vendors. Items such as Biryani, Samosa, Dosa, Pao Bhaji, Kebabs etc., are not generally available with all the carts and can sell for a higher price, leading to a *product differentiation strategy*. A third business strategy could be that a vendor may decide to keep some of the unique food items and offer better value by following a mix of cost leadership and product differentiation strategies to be successful at a given location.

***From Plan to Rollout:*** The next step, after a person acquires the license, food cart, insurance, has a marketing plan and business strategy in place is to get his or her hands wet. Many vendors use their own trucks to tow the carts into the vending location, others use third party services for the same. Most of the vending locations are predesignated by the city to avoid any confusion or fights over the cart parking location. The carts are serviced with food supplies, condiments, drinks, ice, fuel (gas cylinders), disposable serving materials, and packaging at their nightly storage or at their vending location at the start of the day or throughout the day based on their requirement. Currently most NYC street food cart businesses operate on a cash and carry basis, with no receipts given to the customers, and the prices displayed are the prices charged with no tax component identified in the charges.

**Business Environment (External Situation Analysis):** We look at the prevailing business environment for the street food cart vendors from the following considerations.

***Competitive Environment:*** The competitive environment for NYC food cart business is examined in the light of Michael Porter's five forces model (Figure-1) that includes the following five forces: buyers bargaining power, suppliers bargaining power, threat of new entrants, threat of substitution, and rivalry amongst the firms (Grundy, 2006).

***Buyers Bargaining Power:*** With huge number of vendors, small size of orders, availability of food carts almost everywhere in the Manhattan area of the city, choice of food options across the carts with little differences in the offerings, prices, and portions etc., the customers' bargaining power is higher

than that of vendors. Their ability to substitute was high and the cost of inconvenience to substitute is low, with many vendors around.

**Suppliers Bargaining Power:** Though there are millions of hungry people in New York City every day looking for a decent and fulfilling meal, the number of vendors is also very large. Hence the suppliers (vendor's) bargaining power is lower compared to that of buyers. There is not much difference in the product range, prices, and portions etc., giving customers a lot of choice. For the vendors the ability to substitute the offerings was low and the cost to substitute was high.

**Threat of Substitution:** In the short term, the threat of substitution for a vendor is high. This is not only because of competition among the vendors but also because of the availability of other eating options, such as fast-food chain stores like Subway, McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Burger King, Chipotle and so forth, to the prospective buyers, nearby. In the long term, with changing consumers' tastes and preferences, like the demand for popular food items from South-East Asia, such as Biryani, Samosa, Dosa, Pau Bhaji etc., they can start carrying those items as well. There is little change in cost for the customers as the prices for these entrée items are not very different, but their availability is a little less prevalent now with chain fast-food restaurants. Many of the fixed location restaurants like Domino's have started their satellite mobile locations as well, to compete with the street food cart vendors.

**Threat of New Entry:** Though there are several barriers for new street food vendor entrants, with the limitation and a cap on vending permits, strict vending regulation, initial investment needed, food preparation and retail training required, and competition with other vendors. A lot of new vendors enter the fray while some older ones decide to leave for other earning options, every now and then. For example, recent spurt in Uber and Lyft cabs have given a better, cleaner, and more flexible earning opportunity to thousands of people around the world and in New York City, many of these are former street food cart owners.

**Competitive Rivalry:** With many vendors, customers, and little product differentiation, the street food cart business is a good example of monopolistic competitive scenario. Competitive product offerings, price, portion size, and service can create a competitive advantage for a vendor. However, there is a strong dissent among the restaurant owners for the city's permits to food cart vendors, as they eat away their business, before a customer could consider them as an option.



Figure 1: Michael Porter's Five Forces Model

**Regulatory Environment:** The city of New York over the years has tried to control the number of carts by limiting the number of permits, having strict food hygiene and safety, requirements, stringent guidelines for parking. And enforcing these regulations and other city laws through the NY police, fire, health, and parking violations bureau. But many vendors complain of the biased attitude of law enforcement agencies and unnecessary issue of tickets for petty reasons, making it tough for the vendors to operate with levied fines that eat up their profit margins. Also, the city regulation at times is confusing and lacks clarity in reasoning if a citation is issued that often ends up in courts, leading to waste of time and resources.

**Social and Cultural Environment:** New York City is well known for its social, cultural, and ethnic diversity. Being a highly cosmopolitan city, it is one of the biggest residential, employment, and tourist hubs in the world. However, the social and cultural fabric of the city is continuously changing, and that includes the likes and taste preferences of people who look for a nice street

food snack or a summative meal. Thus, it is important for the vendors to keep abreast of the changing food-like trends of the people, and accordingly offer a portfolio of items that are popular eating preferences of the public.

***Economic and Demographic Environment:*** The state of economy, unemployment rate, disposable income, and demographics of the customers play a big role in the demand variations for the street food. At present the US economy is doing reasonably well, with unemployment rate at around 4%, people have better salaries, and higher disposable income to afford street food more often than to bring homemade lunches or sandwiches. Gender might play a role in spending on street food with females being thriftier, but for the cost it appears, that demographics such as age, income, social status, education etc., may not be a differentiating factor, but these assumptions need to be verified with survey data.

***Weather and Climatic Conditions:*** Though NYC has cold winters, moderate summers, and is subject to rain and nor'easters, the average and expected climatic conditions have less impact on the demand for street food compared to the influence of weather conditions on day-to-day basis. No matter whether it's rain or snow, hot or cold, or winter or summer, there is no dearth of people in New York City, or for that matter dearth of vendors who offer street food. On weekends the demand for food in the financial/office district falls, but it surges near the tourist attractions.

## **KEY CHALLENGES AND ISSUES**

### **From the Perspective of The Vendors**

According to streetvendor.org, there are as many as 20,000 street vendors (including 10,000 street food vendors) in New York City — fast-food vendors, beverage vendors, hot dog and pretzel vendors, sweet and salty nuts vendors, ice cream vendors, flower vendors, t-shirts, caps, and city memorabilia vendors, street artists, fancy food trucks, and many others. They are small businesspeople struggling to make ends meet. Most are immigrants and people of color. Some are US military veterans who served their country but fell back on the economic ladder. They work long hours under harsh conditions, asking for nothing more than a chance to sell their goods on the public sidewalk. Yet, in recent years, vendors have been victims of New York's aggressive "quality of life" crackdown. They have been denied access to vending licenses. Many streets have been closed to them at the urging of powerful business groups. They receive

exorbitant tickets for minor violations like vending too close to a crosswalk — more than any big businesses are required to pay for similar violations (<http://streetvendor.org/>). On top of that, a cap on permits could cost up to \$30,000 for a prospective vendor to get a food cart license in the black market.

Bromley (2000) identified arguments used to justify the continuation and proliferation of street vending, but these vary considerably from country to country, city to city, and in accordance with the specific characteristics of the vendor, merchandise, and neighborhood. These include the following – 1) Through their transactions, street vendors contribute directly to the overall level of economic activity, and to the provision of goods and services. 2) Street vending is an actual or potential source of government tax revenues through licensing fees, through sales and value-added taxes charged by vendors and subsequently paid to the government. 3) Through their work, street vendors contribute to sustaining themselves and their dependents. 4) Street vending is a laboratory for entrepreneurship, family business and social interaction, linking vendors and clients into the broader economic and social system. 5) Street vending provides entrepreneurial opportunities to people who cannot afford to buy or rent fixed premises. 6) Street vendors greatly expand the range of places and times where goods and services can be provided, and sometimes they also offer goods and services which are not available in off-street locations. 7) Street vendors bring life to dull streets. 8) They serve as living signs to show where economic activity — on-street and off-street — is concentrated. 9) Street vending offers its workers considerable flexibility in hours and levels of activity, and it provides some choices of work locations. And 10) Street vending is a remarkable example of self-help and grass-roots initiative. Some of the challenges faced by street food vendors in NYC are discussed below:

***Crowded and Cluttered Business:*** The business of street food vending in NYC is already cluttered and crowded with thousands of vendors on the streets. With no GPS system to track and match the permit numbers, there is a chance that some of the carts are illegal or duplicated, since there appears to be a discrepancy between allowed permits and carts on the streets. However, this needs to be verified with the city and the data.

***Confusing and Changing City Regulation:*** Vendors complain about confusing city guidelines about street food vending that either keep on changing without proper notification or is enforced differently in distinct areas of the city. In addition, there appears to be a communication gap between the city offices and the vendors.

***Shifting Customer Preferences and Threat of Substitution:*** Another major challenge for the vendors is the shifting customer taste preferences and threat of any popular new items being adopted to be sold by rival vendors nearby, or the buyers preferring to eat at fixed location restaurants nearby.

***Threat from Formal Restaurant Owners:*** Since street food vendors tend to eat into the business opportunity of formal restaurants or encroach public space in front of any other general store, their owners constantly pressure the city council to bring about strict and restrictive legislation against them. Most of these restaurants are big chains with deep pockets, spare money, and political influence, against the largely unorganized and poor vendor population with no representation in the city council.

***Unreasonable Law Enforcement:*** Many vendors complain about the unsympathetic attitude of law enforcement agencies and personnel towards the street food vendors by writing them tickets unnecessarily or not being reasonable with them. There is also an unspoken expectation of free food from the vendors, perhaps in exchange for a little lenient attitude, by the law enforcement agents.

***Unorganized and Poorly Represented Business:*** Currently, the street food vendors are poorly organized and represented in the city council. There is only one organization called streetvendor.org that is trying to bring the vendors together for their common interests, but currently only about 10% (2000) of the estimated street vendors are its members.

***Effort Versus Pay-off and Other Earning Options:*** With things getting more competitive, tighter regulations, long working hours, and eroding profit margins; many street food vendors are looking for other viable business opportunities that have low startup costs, better work environment, and decent margins. For example, some of them have ventured into driving an Uber/Lyft cab that gives them flexible hours and better earnings. Others move from a big city like New York to own small businesses like gas stations, grocery stores, or restaurants to smaller towns; investing their savings after a few years of hard work as a street food vendor in NYC, but it is easier said than done.

### **From the Perspective of The City**

Street vending in many ways epitomizes the challenges of contemporary urban governance and its evolving policy considerations. In many cities, existing formal businesses call on the government to curb street vending because they view

vendors as unfair competitors who are not paying the same costs of doing business. At the same time, some advocates and practitioners in the international economic development community view vendors as legitimate informal sector microentrepreneurs who need support. Vending similarly can also be viewed as a private capture of public space that involves significant costs. In addition to it representing a violation of municipal codes, vending's presence in locations lacking an infrastructure meant for such commerce means it can be an impediment to traffic flow and contribute to congestion and other negative externalities, including pedestrian and consumer safety. Vending, however, can also contribute to civic vitality, economic development, employment, and services and product provision. To realize these benefits, some call for new models of public space that accommodate commercial activities such as vending into city plans. These types of competing narratives have made street vendors the focus of intense scrutiny, with governments and even administrations within the same government, reaching different conclusions on their legitimacy and the appropriate level and manner of regulatory oversight (Bostic, Kim, and Valenzuela Jr, 2016).

Arguments against street vending as identified by Bromley (2000) are as follows: 1) Street vendors are not evenly spread across the city. They concentrate very heavily in a few locations, and those locations are typically the points with the highest levels of pedestrian and vehicular congestion. 2) They contribute to vehicle and pedestrian congestion, street vendors may cause traffic accidents, increase the levels of vehicle-generated air pollution, and impede the flow of police, fire, ambulance, and other emergency vehicles. 3) Street vendors may block the routes of egress from crowded buildings like theaters, stadiums, and department stores, increasing the scale of the tragedy in the event of a major fire, explosion, toxic gas escape or mass hysteria. 4) Street vendors can and often do "forestall" off-street businesses, attracting potential purchasers as they walk into a concentration of on- and off-street business activity. 5) Street vendors often fail to give receipts and keep accounts, to pay taxes on their earnings, and to charge sales or value added taxes to their customers. 6) They are constantly accused of presenting "unfair competition" to tax-paying off-street businesses, undercutting their off-street competitors because they pay less overheads and no taxes. 7) Because they can leave or relocate their businesses more easily, street vendors have greater opportunity to swindle their customers and avoid official regulations than vendors in fixed retail establishments. 8) Street vendors of food and drink pose major public health problems because their merchandise may be more exposed to the sun, to air pollution, and to

contamination by passers-by, because few have electricity and sophisticated cooking and refrigeration equipment. 9) Street vendors may be less professional, committed, and responsible than off-street vendors, such as using hand gloves when preparing food, or wearing professional attire. 10) Through the activity and congestion that they generate, street vendors provide opportunities for pickpocketing, snatching thefts and armed assaults.

**Use of Public Space and Pedestrian Traffic:** One of the biggest challenges the city of New York faces with the street vendors is the use and encroachment of public space that inhibits flow of pedestrian traffic and may pose a safety risk in case of an emergency evacuation. It is not only the cart but the customers who surround it during peak hours of traffic congestion, adding to the chaos. Some vendors place additional pieces of equipment or items on the side of the cart, such as a garbage bin, beverage stacks, supplies etc., which makes it worse.

**Health and Safety Concerns:** A study (Basch et al. 2015) conducted to determine how often mobile food cart vendors in New York City (NYC) changed gloves after exchanging money, which is required by the current NYC health code as one of various measures to prevent foodborne illness, determined that in majority (56.9 %, n = 1,026) of the 1,804 money exchanges, food cart vendors did not change their gloves. Not changing gloves after touching money may result in indirect transmission of disease agents and pose health risks for consumers. In addition, proper refrigeration or heat might be needed to store some raw food items while the cart is out on the street to prevent them from going bad.

**Sales Tax Collection:** The New York State and City charge sales tax on many services and on retail sales for most goods. The total sales and use tax rate in New York City are 8.875%. This includes New York City local sales and use tax rate of 4.5%, New York State sales and use tax rate of 4%, Metropolitan Commuter Transportation District surcharge of 0.375%. Some items and services are exempt from sales tax in NY that include clothing or footwear that costs less than \$110, unprepared and packaged food products, dietary foods, certain beverages, and health supplements sold by food markets, and some other items such as drugs, newspapers, veterinary services, shoe repair, hearing aids, eyeglasses etc., (<https://www1.nyc.gov/nyc-resources/service/2389/sales-tax>). Street food sales are subject to the sales tax which should be included or added to the price of food items sold and identified in the receipt given. Unfortunately, all transactions made by the vendors are in cash with no receipt



given to show the tax component of the charges. There is also no clarity on how the city can make a vendor liable for his or her tax liability during a certain period or at the end of the year.

***Professional Attire, Use of Gloves, and Attitude:*** Many critics of street food vendors complain about them not wearing professional attire, aprons, using hand gloves and caps while preparing the food, and showing less respect and courtesy to the customers.

## DISCUSSION

### What needs to be Done?

The findings of a recent study on street food vending (Ehrenfeucht, 2016) suggest that fewer regulations are needed to meet legitimate public purposes, and cities would benefit from a new approach in which they reduced street vending regulations and actively planned to enhance compatibility with other urban activities. The laws governing street vending in New York City are confusing, convoluted, at times contradictory and difficult to enforce with any sort of consistency. In this context of uncertainty and illegibility, the practice of street vending in New York and particularly in central areas of Manhattan, is managed in decentralized, privatized, and informal ways (Devlin, 2011).

In addition, the food cart vendors should form some kind of association to represent their cause with the city council, while also encouraging the member vendors to implement the regulations legislated by the city in the interest of all the stake holders that include the vendors, city, customers, pedestrians, law enforcement, environmentalists, health professionals, residents, visitors, and public.

### What is being done?

***Revised City Regulation:*** New York City council capped the number of food vendor permits at 4,235 in the 1980s. But many more people than that make a living by vending: There are currently more than 10,000 vendors operating throughout the city, most of whom are immigrants, according to the Street Vendor Project. The city sells vending permits that must be renewed every two years for \$200, but the same two-year permits can fetch as much as \$30,000 on the black market. The reform package, an initiative of Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, aims to phase in 4,445 more permits, lowering barriers to entry and reducing the threat of fines faced by the thousands of

vendors who currently operate illegally. The legislation also includes revised guidelines about where food carts can set up shops. Carts should be placed within three feet of the curb on sidewalks and maintain at least 12 feet for pedestrian flow, for instance. Notably, the bill would reduce the required distance from a street corner, driveway, or subway entrance — from 10 feet to five. That could put the squeeze on pedestrians, especially on the city's more crowded streets. In testimony submitted to the city council, TA Research and Policy Manager Ms. Julia Kite expressed general support for the legislation while recommending steps to ensure carts don't conflict with pedestrian and cyclist movements.

***ABC Grading of Street Food Vendors:*** Thousands of street food carts and trucks around NYC will be graded by the City's Health Department ranging from "A" to "C" starting December. But it'll take a whole two years for the Health Department to grade thousands of carts authorized to sell food in the city. It'll be a similar grading system to the one for restaurants, and the carts will also be tagged with GPS locators, so inspectors can find them (<https://ny.eater.com/2018/11/12/18087398/street-food-trucks-carts-health-grades-nyc>). While some vendors may be nervous to have their business tarnished by a subpar grade, others are excited to strip the negative stigma associated with street carts. "Of course, it's good for business," said foot cart worker Faiaz Sarkar. "If it's clean customers are going to come, if it's fresh customers going to come." "Letter grades on food carts and trucks will help New Yorkers see how these businesses fared on their latest inspection, right when they want to place an order," said Acting Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot. "Just as diners appreciate letter grading in restaurants, we expect this program to be popular among customers of food carts and trucks" (<https://newyork.cbslocal.com/2018/11/09/a-b-c-health-dept-grades-coming-to-nyc-food-trucks-and-carts/>). NYC street vendors currently face yearly health inspections, but simply receive a passing or failing grade. Under the new law, a passing, yet low grade of a "C" could be crippling to a hot dog vendor that has an A-rated competitor on the next corner. Street vendors will need to literally clean up their acts, because low-rated vendors may quickly be put out of business.

***Environmentally Friendly Food Carts:*** Under a pilot program, 500 environmentally superior food carts will be provided to vendors across the city. They will greatly reduce pollution, increase safety for vendors and the public and provide the kitchen needed for clean food preparation. Currently, food carts run on dirty, noisy diesel generators and/or propane, producing

lots of greenhouse gas emissions, nitrogen oxide, particulate matter and carbon monoxide, not to mention leaks and explosions from using propane. High energy and maintenance costs can result in inadequate food refrigeration and cart ventilation, which can lead to spoiled food and other health concerns. MOVE Systems unique food cart combines a restaurant-grade kitchen with refrigeration that runs on a combination of solar, a battery and compressed natural gas (CNG). A hybrid controller determines if the cart's energy demand can be met by the battery alone, and vendors will be able to charge the battery at electric car charging stations across the city. The result: greenhouse gas emissions were reduced by 60% and smog-causing nitrogen oxide pollution, 95%. Even better, in the future it could run on biogas (<https://www.sustainablebusiness.com/nyc39s-ubiquitous-food-carts-could-soon-run-on-biogas-52895/>).

**Representation of Vendors:** “The Street Vendor Project” is a membership-based project with nearly 2,000 vendor members who are working together to create a vendor’ movement for permanent change. The manifesto of this project states the following objectives: 1) We reach out to vendors in the streets and storage garages and teach them about their legal rights and responsibilities. 2) We hold meetings where we plan collective actions to get our voices heard. 3) We publish reports and file lawsuits to raise public awareness about vendors and the enormous contribution they make to our city. Finally, 4) We help vendors grow their businesses by linking them with small business training and loans. The Street Vendor Project is part of the Urban Justice Center, a non-profit organization that provides legal representation and advocacy to various marginalized groups of New Yorkers.

**Recognition of Best Vendors:** The “Oscars of Street Food” Honors the City’s Best Vendors, called “The Annual Vendee Awards hosted by the Street Vendors Project on Governors Island, NYC (<http://streetvendor.org/about/>). More such recognitions, awards, street food festivals should be instituted with the support of the city, vendor organizations, vendor suppliers, and public to encourage vendors for better service, safety, and quality of their offerings.

### **What else can be done?**

**Clearly Defined and Documented Regulations:** The city council of NYC needs to update and document all the required documentation, rules of street food vending, contact information, and redressal options in form of a printed booklet as well as on their website in pdf downloadable format. Any change or

update in a regulation, addition or deletion of a caveat, minor changes of requirements etc., should be immediately communicated to all the vendors to know and comply. Law enforcement agents should be retained to work with the vendors as partners in the economic growth and activity in the city, rather than treating them as culprits.

***Credit Card Payments, Electronic Transactions, and Sales Tax Collection:*** With the advent of internet and mobile technology, all vendors should be required to charge the customers only through their credit cards, with a swiping device that is attached to the cell phone. All vendors should be required to prepare/print an electronic receipt that clearly identifies the vendor, date, time, items sold, cost, and tax. The electronic receipt generator/printer should be connected through an online application, just like Uber's application. The tax should be automatically deducted from the vendor's account after settlement daily. Vendors should be incentivized for paying their taxes on time and customers should be educated to ask for an official electronic receipt with tax charged or perhaps their food is free with an option to report to the city tax authorities ("no receipt no payment statement" and 800 number to be displayed on the cart). This would prevent them from handling the currency that may lead to infection by food contamination and increase the city's sales tax revenue by many folds. For example, payment system popular in India when buying from small vendors, or getting small services, such as Unified Payments Interface (UPI). It allows for instant, real-time bank transfers via mobile apps due to its ease of use, zero or minimal transaction costs, and widespread adoption by street vendors and small businesses.

***Better Safety and Hygiene Requirements:*** In addition to requiring equipment for proper storage of raw food, wearing gloves while preparing meals, use of proper packaging etc., vendors should also be required to keep a fire extinguisher, a trackable GPS/RFID to locate the cart, and display of numbers of police, fire, and ER's. They should also be provided with an evacuation plan in case of an emergency to remove their cart from the access for emergency personnel.

***Proper Display of "Halal" and Quality Grade Certifications:*** Each cart should be required to have a space marked on one side of the cart for proper and secure display of their permit and certifications, for customers and law enforcement to verify.

***Upgraded Parking and Utilities:*** The city, perhaps with better sales tax collection efforts, should develop designated parking areas for the food carts

and offer them access to utilities such as electric power, gas, garbage disposal, and water supply. This will not only reduce environmental pollution, but also keep the streets cleaner. There can also be designated food court areas planned by the city such as Zuccotti Park at the intersection of Broadway and Liberty Street, with seating areas for people to buy food from a nearby cart and can enjoy the meal with family or friends without any fear of dropping it.

***Better Communication Between the City and Vendors:*** There should be more frequent meetings between the representatives of the street (food) cart vendor's association(s), the representatives of the city of New York, law enforcement agencies, and members of the public for collective bargaining and resolution of issues. In addition, all the vendors should be required to register with the city council to receive electronic updates (via email, text, or postal service) for any planned changes in policy, scheduled meetings, or any new legislation impacting them.

***Additional Earning for Vendors:*** The vendors should be allowed to earn an additional income by carrying advertising billboards for which they could be paid by an outdoor media agency that uses their cart for promoting any product or services, just like the famous yellow cabs of the city. Alternatively, the city can pitch in the corporations to invest in eco-friendly street food carts as part of their corporate social responsibility to support for the cost of a cart to a vendor while getting the benefit of advertising commitment for a certain time.

### **What does the future hold?**

Emerging mobile, internet, software, and artificial intelligence applications/information technologies have already started to revolutionize our lives today in the way we connect with each other (Facebook), hire a cab (Uber/Lyft), order our groceries through the internet (Walmart Pickup), shop online (Amazon), stay for a vacation (Airbnb), rent a car (Touro) order our food online (Grub Hub) etc. Application developers are bringing together the spare capacity of people's resources and their time for mutual benefit with those in need of them by providing an online platform for searching for these resources, ordering, and processing transactions for a small fee or in some cases even for free (Zelle, Google Pay). Uber and Lyft have already started to offer food pickups and delivery from restaurants, with the cost either paid by the customer or shared by the vendors. More recently, CNN recognized Maria Rose Belding (<https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/19/health/cnnheroes-maria-rose-belding>

means/index.html) being one of their “CNN-2018 Heroes” for her efforts to connect hungry/poor people with those who have food to spare at no charge. Perhaps the future looks promising and optimistic for making quality, healthy, and affordable street food available to everyone that can be ordered online and delivered at home.

### **How about global street food vending scenarios and municipal regulation?**

Exploring how some other major large cities address the challenges faced by street food vendors while managing urban space, safety, traffic, and hygiene. We look at the following cities:

**Singapore:** Singapore is known for its strict regulations and cleanliness standards. The city-state has designated hawker centers where street food vendors operate in a controlled environment. These centers are managed by government agencies like the National Environment Agency (NEA), ensuring compliance with hygiene standards. Vendors require licenses and undergo regular inspections to maintain quality and safety standards. Additionally, the government provides support and training programs for vendors to improve their skills and business practices. (NEA Singapore, “Hawker Centers”). In recent years, the Singapore government has undertaken redevelopment projects that involve relocating hawker centers to new sites. This has led to conflicts between vendors and authorities over issues such as rent increases, changes in foot traffic, and maintaining loyal customer bases. For example, when the Golden Mile Food Centre was relocated due to redevelopment plans, vendors expressed concerns about the impact on their businesses and livelihoods.

**Mumbai:** Mumbai’s street food culture is deeply ingrained in its identity. However, the city faces challenges related to hygiene and safety. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) regulates street food vendors through licensing and periodic inspections. There are designated zones and markets where vendors operate under supervision. Additionally, various NGOs and community groups work to improve the conditions for street vendors, advocating for better infrastructure and sanitation facilities (Mumbai Mirror, “How BMC plans to clean up the street food act”). Street food vendors in Mumbai often face challenges in obtaining and renewing licenses and permits due to bureaucratic hurdles and corruption. Many vendors operate without proper documentation, leading to conflicts with municipal authorities who enforce regulations. For instance, clashes between unlicensed street vendors

and municipal inspectors are not uncommon, resulting in fines, confiscation of goods, and sometimes, physical altercations.

**London:** In London, street food markets have become increasingly popular in recent years. Borough Market and Camden Market are notable examples. The city government works with market organizers to ensure compliance with health and safety regulations. Vendors are required to obtain permits and adhere to food hygiene standards set by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Additionally, London's Street Trading Regulations govern the operation of street food stalls, addressing issues like location and operating hours (London.gov.uk, "Street Trading"). In London, street food vendors often face stiff competition for prime market locations and customer attention. Conflicts arise when vendors vie for limited space in popular markets like Borough Market or Camden Market. Some established vendors may resist newcomers entering the market, leading to tensions over access to lucrative spots and customer bases. Additionally, disputes may arise over noise levels, cleanliness, and waste management among vendors sharing communal spaces.

**Dubai:** Dubai has a diverse culinary scene, including street food offerings. The Dubai Municipality regulates street food vendors to ensure food safety and hygiene. Vendors must obtain permits and comply with strict standards enforced by the Food Safety Department. The municipality conducts regular inspections of street food stalls to maintain quality and safety. Additionally, initiatives like the Dubai Food Festival promote street food culture while highlighting vendors' compliance with regulations (Dubai Municipality, "Food Safety"). Street food vendors in Dubai encounter challenges in complying with strict food safety and hygiene regulations imposed by the municipality. Issues arise when vendors struggle to meet the requirements for obtaining permits and adhering to sanitation standards. For example, disputes may occur during routine inspections when vendors are found to be in violation of cleanliness protocols or operating without valid permits, resulting in fines and temporary closures.

**Tokyo:** Tokyo's street food scene is renowned for its variety and quality. However, the city faces challenges related to space and sanitation. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government regulates street food vendors through licensing and hygiene inspections. Vendors must adhere to strict standards to ensure food safety. The government also collaborates with industry associations and community groups to address issues like waste management and pedestrian traffic (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, "Street Food Vendor Regulations").

Tokyo's densely populated urban landscape poses challenges for street food vendors in finding suitable locations to operate. Disputes arise when vendors compete for limited space on sidewalks and public thoroughfares, leading to congestion and pedestrian obstruction. For instance, clashes between street vendors and residents or business owners may occur over encroachment onto private property or blocking access to storefronts, prompting interventions by municipal authorities to regulate street vending activities.

**Sydney:** Sydney embraces street food as part of its culinary diversity. The City of Sydney regulates street food vendors through permits and inspections conducted by the Environmental Health Unit. Vendors must comply with food safety standards outlined in the Food Act 2003 and the Food Standards Code. The city encourages innovation in street food offerings while prioritizing public safety and hygiene. Additionally, initiatives like the Sydney Food Trucks program provide opportunities for vendors to operate legally in designated areas (City of Sydney, "Street Food Vendors"). Street food vendors in Sydney face conflicts related to regulatory compliance and enforcement. Disputes arise when vendors operate without proper permits or fail to meet food safety standards mandated by the city council. For example, conflicts may occur during health inspections when vendors are cited for violations such as improper food handling, inadequate sanitation practices, or operating in unauthorized locations, leading to fines and closures.

**Cairo:** Cairo's street food culture reflects its rich culinary heritage. However, the city faces challenges related to hygiene and urban congestion. The Cairo Governorate regulates street food vendors through licensing and periodic inspections. Vendors must comply with health and safety standards set by the Health Ministry. The government also works to improve infrastructure and sanitation facilities in popular street food areas. Additionally, community initiatives promote responsible waste management and cleanliness (Egypt Independent, "Cairo Authorities to Regulate Street Food Vendors"). In Cairo, street food vendors confront challenges associated with urban planning and infrastructure deficiencies. Problems erupt when vendors operate in informal settlements or areas lacking basic amenities such as sanitation facilities and waste management services. For instance, disputes may occur between vendors and municipal authorities over the allocation of designated vending zones or the installation of proper infrastructure to support street vending activities, highlighting broader issues of urban development and resource allocation.



These examples illustrate the diverse global approaches taken by different cities to manage street food vendors while ensuring public health and safety. Each city adapts its regulations and enforcement mechanisms to address local challenges and cultural preferences. The complex and multifaceted nature of conflicts between street food vendors and municipal authorities in various cities, encompassing issues such as licensing, competition, regulation compliance, urban space management, and infrastructure development, require collaborative efforts and innovative solutions that balance the interests of vendors with the broader goals of urban governance and public welfare, to bring authentic and global flavors on our streets at an affordable price.

## **CONCLUSION**

New York City's vibrant street food culture, especially in areas like Manhattan, faces significant challenges that affect its diverse array of immigrant vendors. These vendors grapple with complex regulations, steep fines, hygiene standards, and competition from both fellow street sellers and established businesses. At the same time, the city must navigate the delicate balance of regulating this thriving industry while ensuring public safety, managing space, and collecting taxes. However, New York's challenges are mirrored in cities worldwide—such as Singapore, Mumbai, and London—each working to integrate street vendors into their urban landscapes. For instance, Singapore has successfully established hawker centers that provide safe, structured environments for vendors, while Mumbai's informal street vending system reflects the city's unique identity and regulatory hurdles. These examples underscore the importance of finding a middle ground between preserving cultural traditions and implementing effective regulations.

A crucial takeaway from this study is that regulatory frameworks must adapt to the city's evolving demographics and economic conditions. A one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate; instead, tailored solutions that respect vendor diversity while meeting urban needs are essential. The emergence of new technologies, including mobile payment platforms and third-party delivery services, offers new opportunities for vendors to expand their reach and improve compliance. Building a collaborative relationship between vendors and city officials is vital for long-term success. Establishing vendor unions, like New York's Street Vendor Project, can amplify their voices in advocating for fair regulations and fostering dialogue with policymakers. Clear regulations and improved communication can also create a more transparent operating environment.

Looking ahead, New York could benefit from adopting regulatory practices from other cities, such as designated vending zones and formal training programs for vendors. By embracing innovation and enhancing cooperation among stakeholders, the city can preserve its rich street food culture while ensuring safety and efficiency in public spaces. In summary, this case study highlights the global implications of street food vending and emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that honors the cultural significance of vendors while addressing modern urban management challenges. Integrating street food culture into the urban fabric sustainably will be a hallmark of successful metropolises in the future.

## CONTRIBUTION

This case study on NYC street food vendors offers valuable insights for academic scholarship, vendors, and public policy. By analyzing the interaction between street vendors and urban governance, it highlights how cities can balance economic inclusion with health, safety, and regulatory needs, while addressing the growing impact of technology and shifting consumer behaviors.

***Contribution to Scholarship:*** This study expands the literature on urban economies, informal markets, and street vending, focusing on how cities manage these sectors through formal regulations. By incorporating a global perspective with examples from cities like Singapore, Mumbai, and London, it contextualizes the regulatory and cultural challenges faced by New York City. The study also opens pathways for future research on the effects of digital transformation—such as mobile payments and delivery apps—on street vendors and informal economies in urban environments.

***Contribution to Vendors:*** For vendors, this study sheds light on the regulatory and competitive challenges they face, while emphasizing the importance of representation and collective action. By looking at successful models from other global cities, vendors can draw inspiration on how to adapt to regulatory environments and leverage modern technologies, such as mobile payment platforms, to improve business operations and compliance.

***Contribution to Public Policy:*** From a policy standpoint, this study emphasizes the need for clear, fair, and inclusive regulations that benefit both vendors and the city. It advocates collaborative policymaking, drawing on global best practices to balance the vibrancy of street food culture with urban management. The study further suggests the integration of digital tools like

mobile payments and GPS tracking to streamline regulation, enhance tax collection, and improve customer experiences. This framework offers a roadmap for fostering sustainable street food cultures while maintaining public order.

### **LIMITATIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This study on NYC's Street food vending provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by street vendors and the implications for urban governance. However, several limitations warrant acknowledgment.

*First*, this research relies solely on secondary data, drawing on existing literature, industry reports, regulatory documents, and news articles. While this approach provides a comprehensive overview, it limits the depth of understanding that might be achieved through primary data sources such as interviews with vendors, city officials, or consumer surveys. Primary data could offer richer, firsthand insights into vendors' day-to-day experiences, particularly regarding regulatory enforcement, customer interactions, and adaptive strategies.

*Second*, the study focuses on street food vending in NYC, and while it includes comparisons to other cities, cultural and regulatory contexts differ widely. Findings specific to NYC may not generalize entirely to other global cities. Future research could conduct city-specific case studies to account for unique regulatory environments, cultural significance, and urban layouts. This comparative analysis could help identify the best practices tailored to different municipal needs.

*Lastly*, the study briefly touches on technology's impact on street vending, such as mobile payments and delivery apps, yet the full scope of technological innovation remains underexplored. Future research could examine how digitalization is transforming street vending, assessing areas like inventory management, customer engagement, and compliance with regulatory requirements. Exploring the potential of emerging technologies, such as AI-driven location recommendations or cashless payment integration, would offer valuable insights into the modernization of this informal sector.

These limitations point to several promising avenues for future research. Incorporating primary data, expanding cross-cultural studies, and exploring technological impacts could significantly enhance the understanding of urban street vending. Such research would contribute to a robust framework for supporting street vendors in urban centers, balancing economic inclusion, public safety, and technological adaptation.

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**APPENDICES**

**1. New York City Map (Google Maps)**



**2. How Profitable is Food Cart Business (<https://www.quora.com/How-profitable-are-food-trucks>):** Adding owners compensation of \$24,000, \$25,200, and \$26,460 to each of the year's Net Business Profit respectively may earn the vendor close to \$50,000 per year.



3. Some pictures of Manhattan, NYC and Food Carts



a. Lower Manhattan, NYC



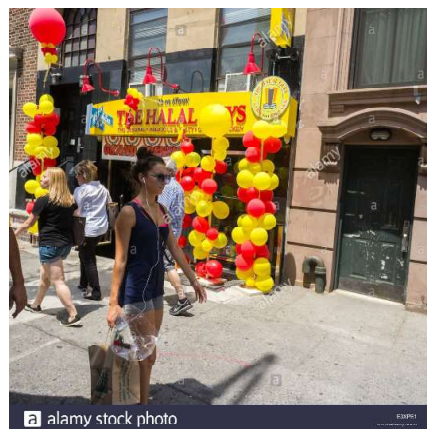
b. Food Cart, NYC



c. Kabir Ahmad, WTC, NYC



d. Kabir Ahmad, Vendor, NYC



e. Halal Guys Restaurant, NYC



f. Hira & Alam, Vandy Cup





g. Lamb Gyro, NYC



h. Halal Food Cart, NYC