


Chapter 9

Evaluating Level of Awareness of Food Terrorism Activities Among Consumers in Klang Valley, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Food terrorism issues have gained attention from the food industry globally. Food terrorism is a threat, sabotage, or contamination act to the food supply chain committed intentionally by people with a purpose to harm the public, jeopardize the economy, and disrupt the social and political system. More seriously, injury and death caused by contaminated food are inevitable. In Malaysia, very few studies have delved into food terrorism research. Therefore, this chapter presents a study to evaluate the level of awareness among consumers in the Klang Valley towards food terrorism activities. A quantitative survey was employed to gather data from consumers residing in the Klang Valley. Approximately 384 reusable surveys were analyzed using Pearson correlation and one-way analysis of variance to generate the results. The results indicated that customers in Klang Valley have an average level of awareness of food terrorism activities. This study offers a baseline reference for future research to investigate a wide area of food terrorism in Malaysia.

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BACKGROUND

Around the globe, the act of terrorism occurred in many ways: hijacking, bombings (mass or suicide), hostage-takings, kidnapping, shooting (random or mass), as well as food contamination in a deliberate manner (Jenkins, 2020; Spink & Moyer, 2011). Terrorism is defined as the unlawful use of violence and intimidation towards civilians at large or a specific group of people (Oxford Reference, 2021). World Health Organization describes food terrorism as an act of intentional contamination using biological, chemical, and physical agents on food supply to cause harm to the public and disrupting the stability of social, economic, or political (Detwiler, 2014). The act of food terrorism has caused million dollars loss to the food-related industry because of the damage caused to the brand image, customers' trust, and reputation of the companies.

In several foodborne disease outbreaks, the contaminated food from intentional sabotage acts was found to have the capability to affect human health such as illness and death. Food terrorism can affect the economy in terms of development in poorly developed areas and worsen the scarcity of food availability (World Health Organization, 2002). The vulnerability of our food system has been highlighted by Tommy G. Thompson, the United States Health and Human Services Secretary, where he said, "I, for the life of me, cannot understand why the terrorists have not attacked our food supply because it is so easy to do." (Cox, 2006). This statement indicates that the most convenient channel to be contaminated deliberately is through our food supply. That being said, some incidents of food terrorism have been reported for the past years in many countries. Table 1 lists out some countries with food terrorism incidents.

Table 1. Countries with food terrorism incidents

Year	Country	Incidents
2020	Indonesia	A fish farmer lost his seven fish ponds due to poisoning by an unknown person
2018	Australia	A coworker was charged for committing a needle scare on packed strawberries resulted from a workplace revenge
2014	Japan	A factory worker was sentenced to life imprisonment after tampering with frozen dumpling with pesticide
2011	USA	A male worker was jailed for contaminating his female coworker's yogurt lunch by injected his semen at the P&G facility
2008	UK	A hypermarket worker was charged for contaminating the store with his urine and feces which had caused £700K loss to the company

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