

## Gauteng Consumers' Perceptions of the Quality of Food Safety in QSR

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### Abstract

Food consumed away from home has been attributed to time scarcity, single-person households, increase in disposable income, and the lack of interest or skill in food preparation (Blick, Abidoye & Kirsten, 2018). Increased dependency on the foodservice sector has led to the provision of food adapted to new and health-sensitive diets; foodservices' transparency of production processes; focus on the provision of quality food products; and the provision of food that is safe for consumption.

The concern over food safety is real with several cases relating to the foodservice sector (Knight et al., 2007; Liu & Lee, 2018). Underreporting of cases (Ramalwa et al., 2020), implies that many who experience food safety struggle to associate their experiences with the food purchased or consumed at restaurants.

The size and growth of the QSR segment has the potential to impact consumers as food is consumed away from home 2-3 times a week. Perception was important in evaluating how consumers interact in these environments and perceive food safety.

The study aimed to investigate how consumers perceive the quality of food safety based on the importance of food safety quality cues, and how they have experienced the food safety quality cues within their consumption environments.

A mixed-method research approach allowed for 1) identification of food safety quality cues the consumer may encounter within a QSR environment and 2) deployment of a consumer survey to evaluate the consumers' perception of the quality of food safety.

Results revealed that the consumers' perceptions of the quality of food safety in QSR regarding importance was highly considered in contrast to their experience (performance) of the quality of food safety. Further analysis revealed that demographics played a role in how food safety was perceived, thus having an implication on consumer food safety awareness and education.

Recommendations concluded that there is a misalignment in what the QSR staff are trained to do in the production and service of food, what they actually do and how the consumer perceives these efforts, requiring further investigation. Relaying the right information to the consumer is imperative to make correct judgements of staff activities.