

# The determinants of food heritage based on age in Klang Valley, Malaysia

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## Abstract

Many countries have reported experiencing external pressures on their culture and tradition, which include losing their food heritage and identity. With that, Malaysia, as a multi-cultural country, is also giving greater concern in preserving its food heritage and identity. This paper empirically examined the public perception of food heritage determinants. Using Klang Valley as data collection setting, 676 respondents comprised of Malays, Chinese, Indian and others were surveyed. The collected data were analysed using the descriptive statistic, mean value and cross-tabulation analysis toward two age group (30-35 and >36 years old). Results revealed that in food heritage determinants which consisted of historical elements as well as practices and integration elements had presented positive perception with the majority of the respondents agreed on each attribute and were significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ) between each age group. Few items under food characteristics and the value of uniqueness showed non-significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) when comparing the age group. This concludes that age group has impacted on some of the attributes which led to different opinion in regards to food heritage determinants.

## Keywords:

Perception, Food heritage determinants, Age group

## **1 Introduction**

The culture and identity of a nation are shaped by the background of its people, their languages, and beliefs. Without these factors, a nation cannot learn how to shape itself and to establish its identity. When a nation is assured of its culture and identity, it tends to have a clear focus on what it wants in a positive manner (Ratnasingam, 2010). Parallel with this nation, Malaysia is experiencing the urgency in having its own food identity as it shares food cultural background with its neighbouring countries. Countries like Singapore and Indonesia, which are sharing common historical roots and cultural heritage, could create tension and dispute especially on the common cuisines or traditional food primarily when each country pursues to validate those cuisines or traditional foods as their identity. According to Chong (2012), each country becomes more aggressive in defending and protecting such heritage as theirs to safeguard the country's identity. These incidences showed the importance to at least have their own cultural identity like oral tradition, languages, festive events, rites and beliefs, music and songs, the performing arts, traditional medicine, literature, traditional sports and games as well as traditional cuisine identity (Lim, 2012), although sharing the fundamental basis of it is unavoidable. With that, this paper is assessing the public perception on the food identity attributes in relation to image, authenticity and sustainability of food heritage.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 What is Food Heritage**

Food holds the key to any culture and people make many assumptions about other people's diets based on whom they claim to be, and people also make assumptions about whom the people are, based on what they eat (Counihan & Van Esterik, 2012). Mintz (1996) noted that consumption is always conditioned by the foods we eat and how we preserve, prepare, and serve it and all have meanings at some levels. Consumption or eating in all cultures is expressive of both beliefs-systems and social distinctions that exist within groups and society. The food that we eat is closely linked to cultural codes, and it is precise that this will enable the food to become a good indicator of identity (Crouch & O'Neill, 2000). Kittler and Sucher (2004) claimed that consumption and preparation of food, which is popularly known as foodways, give valuable insights into the community that performs these acts. Foodways through work like a sign system of language can transcend time and space. They bring meaning from one reality from the past into another and signal an individual's ethnic connections and competence (Kaplan, 1984). Many researchers refer to foodways as the connection between food-related behaviour and patterns of membership in a cultural community, group, society or nation (Cusack, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Gold, 2007; Gutierrez, 2012; Vu, 2008). Richards (2003) contended that foodways are the significant element in food identity formation not only for the society but also for a nation, particularly in a pluralistic society. Cozzi (2005) and Fox and Ward (2008), on the other hand, deduced that the adaptations of foodways (preparation and consumption of food) from various

ethnic groups by each ethnic group in a multiracial and cultural nation will lead to common acceptable food and longitudinally forming what could be called a national food identity.

In the Malaysian context, food heritage has been categorised by former Heritage Commissioner of National Heritage Department, as synonymous or common foods that are part of humans lives and foods that have almost extinct or slowly dying out although they were once part of human culture (Wahid, Mohamed & Sirat, 2009). Food heritage can also be reflected from the environment history, belief, ideology and food technology of the society in the era or period of time (Utusan, 2010). Furthermore, food heritage includes food aspects that are unique to a particular culture in terms of the foods' ingredients, method of preparation, dishes, or service (Shariff, Mokhtar & Zakaria, 2008). There are more than 100 types of Malaysian favourite foods which have been announced and registered as national food heritage (Negara, 2012). The food heritage list is divided into seven categories, namely rice, noodles, gravies and accompaniments, appetisers, cake, porridge, dessert and drinks (Negara, 2012). Each category of food was selected based on the preferential status to preserve the identity of these foods (Elis, 2009).

## **2.2 Determinants of Food Heritage Elements**

Food heritage determinants can be associated with the historical elements, food characteristics, the value of uniqueness, practice and integration element as mentioned by Ramli et al. (2013). Each of the determinant elements is being explained by researchers such as in historical elements where Guerrero et al. (2009) stated that the dimension of traditional foods consisted of the elements of habit, natural, origin and locality. The element of habit and natural associated traditional food with something anchored in the past to the present, transmitted from one generation to another or food that has been consumed from the past or existed for a long time that has always been part of the consumers' life. Hjalager and Corigliano (2000) identified historic resources as focal points of food festivals and special events that attract tourists and residents. They further asserted that the culture of the food and eating festivals could promote local culinary traditions, lifestyles and gastronomic heritage (Guerrero et al., 2009). Lin, Pearson and Cai (2011) revealed that the origin of food is the most important information in aiding international tourists to recognise the authenticity of a nation. Hence, most traditional foods with heritage status are promoted as gastrotourism products to tourists with the intention to allow them to experience a part of the country's culture.

Staple, flavouring and preparation are the food characteristics closely related to heritage. Belasco (2008) and Rozin (2006) stated that staple foods or basic food which has a unique value and significant to communities ranging from meat and potatoes, stew and fufu (porridge) and many others could be classified as heritage. Flavouring, which has a distinctive way of seasoning dishes, distinctive flavour and combinations serve as crucial group "markers" closely associated with heritage. For instance, culinary identity in parts of Orient (China) may be expressed through the combination of soy sauce, garlic,

and sesame oil, while a mix of garlic, tomato, olive oil may signal Southern Italian, and Thailand are well known using fermented fish sauce, coconut milk, chilli peppers, garlic, ginger root, lemon grass and tamarind in their cooking. Specific cuisines favour distinct manner of preparing food such as stir-frying in China; stewing for Mexico (Kittler, Sucher, & Nelms, 2011) are one of the food characteristics linked with heritage. Guerrero et al. (2009) highlighted taste as one of the factors in recognising the authenticity of a food product or cuisine. Karim et al. (2011) posited that staple food, cooking method and taste should be preserved and sustained as it represented the identity of the community or ethnic and considered as country's food heritage and the representation way of a country's food identity (representing identity of the community or ethnic and this considers the country's food heritage as to represent the country's food identity).

Guerrero et al. (2009) associated the value of uniqueness as food innovation which uses new or unusual ingredients, new combinations of products; different processing systems or elaboration procedure including packaging, coming from different origin or cultures, being presented and supplied in new ways; and always having temporary validity. This value has a significant role in defining the meaning of heritage.

In the practices and integration elements, a cross-cultural process through the acculturation, assimilation and adaptation play a vital part as it is closely associated with heritage (Kwik, 2008). The cross-cultural process consists of food knowledge which referred to the cultural tradition of sharing food, recipes and cooking skills and techniques and passing down such collective wisdom through generations (Cleveland, Laroche, Pons & Kastoun, 2009).

### **2.3 The Public Perception towards Traditional Foods**

There are only a few studies which had focused on public perception of traditional or heritage foods. Public perception, often seen akin to public opinion, which is defined by the general collective information on thoughts from the society on a specific issue or problem identified through surveys (Dowler, Green, Bauer & Gasperoni, 2006). Organisations such as government departments or policy-makers assess vital information obtained from public perception in that effective developing interventions. Besides intervention programmes, education becomes a necessary tool to relay information, informing the public's cultural and fostering interest towards their national heritage (Abdelazim Ahmed, 2017).

Pufall et al. (2011) has stated the public, who are the indigenous people, has positive feedback on local traditional food in the aspects of wholesomeness, safety and value for both communal and cultural practices. The development of public perception of traditional food, moreover, is impacted by society's ethnocentrism level. Consumers from developed countries were found to be ethnocentric and support strongly to local traditional foods with the idea that it has quality as well as believe by doing so contributes to the act of devotion towards both family members and country (Vanhonacker, Almlı, Hersleth & Verbeke, 2010).

Other than ethnocentrism, tourism activities are sometimes seen as a ticking time bomb that can jeopardise the sustainability of local's demographic and original socio-cultural practices especially to less developed countries (Yeniasır & Gökbulut, 2018). Despite the economic advantages given from gastrotourism to a country, there are possibilities of distortion of the original recipe, method of preparation, way of eating or serving of traditional foods as to accommodate the preferences and expectations of foreign tourists.

## **2.4 The Effect of Age towards Determinants of Food Heritage**

In relation to this study, the traditional cuisine is one of the best examples of cultural heritage which covers unique aspects of a particular culture in terms of the ingredients, preparation methods, dishes, or services of foods. This type of cultural heritage is more difficult to preserve than a physical object as it concerns the values, beliefs, behaviours and rules of the society which is difficult to measure especially among the public (Shariff, Mokhtar & Zakaria, 2008).

However, the awareness and knowledge among the public regarding the traditional cuisine has increased in recent years (Alibabić et al., 2012; Dike, 2012; Hamzah et al., 2013; Jalis, Che, & Markwell, 2014; Meléndez Torres & De la Fuente, 2012; Sompong & Rampai, 2015; Timothy & Ron, 2013; Wang, De Steur, Gellynck & Verbeke, 2015).

Age, in this study, is related to identity, especially among youth who undergo the most critical period in their lives from the age of 16 to 25 years old. The phase of youth identity formation is associated with the greatest level of experimentation as well as openness to external influences. Today, the external influences are evident not just in the immediate social environment but also from the cyber world as evident in the term 'netizen' which is popular among the youngs (Ratnasingam, 2010). It shows that the influence of age categories is significant on social identity formation, and the youth's contribution to this matter is further anticipated in years to come.

## **3 Methodology**

A causal research design using a quantitative approach through a cross-sectional study was applied with a self-reported and self-administered survey questionnaire. This study is assessing public perception of food heritage determinants attributes, which are historical elements, food characteristics, the value of uniqueness and practice and integration.

### **3.1 Sampling and Population**

The target population is among the public, which is the Malaysian genders consisting of Malay, Chinese, Indian and other ethnic groups. Salkind and Rainwater (2003) argued that studying a sample rather than an entire population also leads to more reliable results, mainly because it is able to reduce fatigue and fewer errors in data collection. However, due to high number of samples of the population of those Malaysians residing in the Klang Valley, which comprises of the Federal Territory of Kuala

Lumpur, Putrajaya, the Petaling district in Selangor (Shah Alam, Petaling Jaya and Subang Jaya), Gombak, Klang and Hulu Langat and their suburbs and adjoining cities and towns were selected.

### **3.2 Research Instrument**

The survey instrument consists of five major sections with Section A soliciting the information about respondents' demographic information. Section B is dealing with (4) food heritage determinants i.e. historical element, food characteristic, the value of uniqueness and practice and integration. In this paper, items under Section B were analysed through 2 different age categories (i.e. 30-35 and > 36). Most items in all dimensions were replicated from the previous related studies with a few minor modifications of wording made to address on specific needs of the study (Guerrero et al., 2009; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Lin, Pearson & Cai, 2011; Lertputtarak, 2012; Rand, Heath & Alberts, 2003; Robinson & Clifford, 2012; Vanhonacker et al., 2010; Yurtseven, 2011). Respondents were required to translate their view on a five type Likert scale ranging from 1 with "strongly disagree" to 5 "strongly agree".

### **3.3 Data Collection Process**

On data collection, the questionnaire survey was conveniently administered by the researchers at the stipulated areas. The ethnic respondents were initially approached, and those met with the age set by the researcher were invited to take part in the study. With the full cooperation and commitment given by most of the ethnic respondents, a total of 676 respondents were successfully distributed within 90 days of the survey period. The collected data was analysed using SPSS software. Descriptive analysis was used in addressing the objective of the study by using mean value and chi-square.

## **4 Findings and Discussion**

### **4.1 Respondent Profile**

Through frequency tests, out of 676 respondents, the number of females exceeded between the age with 186 respondents at age 30-35 and 204 respondents at age > 36 years. Referring to Table 1, majority of the respondents are Malays for 288 (30-35 years) and 234 respectively (>36 years) as opposed to 'Others' ethnic comprised of Sabah and Sarawak *Bumiputera* which comprised of 6 (30-35 years) and 7 (>36 years). Most of the respondent's aged between 30-35 years (N= 137) and 162 of respondents are at the age of >36 years old and are working in the private sector. There is a similarity in the educational background as it displayed both respondents of the age 30-35 and >36 years old who majority possessed a diploma.

Table 1: Demographic background by Frequency

(n=676)	Age	
	30-35	>36
Gender		
Male	152	134
Female	186	204
Ethnicity		
Malay	288	234
Chinese	26	52
Indian	18	45
Others	6	7
Profession		
Government servant	129	109
Private servant	137	162
Professional	10	28
Student	52	3
Others	10	36
Education		
UPSR	0	4
SRP/PMR	1	21
SPM	57	72
Diploma	244	118
Degree	36	76
Master	0	33
PhD	0	10
Others	0	4

#### 4.2 Age Difference in Food Heritage (FH) Attributes

The descriptive statistic looking at the mean score was used in examining an overall perception on the food heritage determinants through attributes such as historical elements, food characteristics, the value of uniqueness, practice and integration elements (refer Table 2, 3, 4 and 5). Table 2 shows the magnitude of the mean scores ranging from 3.96 to 4.13 which indicated that respondents are toward agreeing with all of the items and there are significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences between the ages of 30 - 35 and > than 36 years old. As such, in historical elements, they agreed that food heritage symbolises cultures of an ethnic, regionals or states ( $M = 4.13$ , HV3). The respondents also agreed on considering food heritage as food-related with festival or celebration ( $M = 4.07$ , HV5); a well-known traditional food ( $M = 4.06$ , HV1) and the family's favourite and commonly consumed food ( $M = 4.05$ , HV4). A slightly lower mean score appeared on the item "food heritage should contain historical elements" ( $M = 3.96$ , HV2).

In the original aspect, the mean scores ranging from 3.82 to 4.32 had indicated that the respondents agreed with all the items and all of the items were significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) in terms of differences between age groups. The respondents agreed that food heritage

consists of the traditional recipe (M = 4.32, OR2). They also approved that food heritage must be based on its original ingredients (M = 4.21, OR3); must represent the origin of traditional (M = 4.16, OR5) and as a representative to particular groups of the nations (M = 4.05, OR4). The item "food heritage can be consumed daily" had obtained a slightly lower mean score (M = 3.82, OR1).

Meanwhile, for traditional value, the mean scores are ranging from 4.04 to 4.21, which indicated that respondents had agreed with all of the items. There were significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the age groups. It was agreed that food heritage is closely associated with traditional local cuisines (M = 4.21, TV1). The respondents also agreed that it associates with religion, culture and special event (M = 4.16, TV5); must represent local food culture (M = 4.12, TV2); and produced in a traditional way (M = 4.11, TV3). A slightly lower means score appeared on the item "food must contain or to be associated with traditional ingredients" (M = 4.04, TV4).

Table 2: Reported Mean Score for Historical Attribute: Historical Element

Items	Historical Elements	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value (2 sided)
Historical Value				
HV1	Food heritage represents a well-known traditional food	4.06	0.719	0.005
HV2	Food heritage should contain historical elements	3.96	0.722	0.000
HV3	Food heritage symbolises cultures of an ethnic, regionals or states	4.13	0.617	0.008
HV4	When I think about food heritage, I relate food that has always been available and popular within the families for generations	4.05	0.702	0.013
HV5	When I think about food heritage, I relate it with festival or celebrations	4.07	0.683	0.002
Originality				
OR1	Food heritage is food that is consumed daily	3.82	0.924	0.000
OR2	Food heritage consists of traditional recipe	4.32	0.582	0.008
OR3	Food heritage is based on original ingredients that distinguish it from other types of food	4.21	0.629	0.000
OR4	Food heritage represents the traditional food of particular groups of the nations	4.08	0.669	0.012
OR5	Food heritage represents the origin of the traditional	4.16	0.627	0.002
Traditional Value				
TV1	Food heritage is closely associated with traditional local cuisines	4.21	0.665	0.000
TV2	Food heritage represents the local food culture	4.12	0.632	0.014
TV3	Food heritage must be produced 'in a traditional way', either in preparation, cooking methods and presentation	4.11	0.712	0.008
TV4	Food heritage should contain or be associated with traditional ingredients	4.04	0.676	0.020
TV5	Food heritage is usually associated with religion, culture, special events of festival celebration	4.16	0.647	0.000

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not Sure, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.  
 \*Not Significant =  $p > 0.05$ . Note (n=676)

The food characteristic aspect, as shown in Table 3, comprises of items on staple ingredients, flavour principle, cooking method and food presentation. The mean scores ranged from 3.99 to 4.06 indicating that the respondents all agreed with the items. All of these items have significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) differences between the ages of 30 – 35 and > than 36 years old. The respondents had agreed that food heritage is usually associated with local staple diets (M= 4.06 SI2); related to common acceptable ingredients used by the locals (M= 4.05, SI3). It was also agreed that food heritage is usually related to common acceptable ingredients used by locals (M= 4.02, SI4) and is attributed to food consumption of a specific community based on the lifestyle and socio-economic (M= 3.99, SI5). The item of "food heritage is connected with staple ingredients used in specific occasion or celebration" received the lowest mean value in the food ingredient aspect (M = 3.98, SI1).

In flavour principle, it had obtained mean scores in the range of 4.00 to 4.13, which indicated the agreement with all the items that showed significant differences between the two age groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). The respondents agreed upon items "food heritage is identified through the authenticity of taste that is derived from the unique ingredients (M= 4.13, FV3); food heritage is linked with the distinctive local ingredients of a region or state (M= 4.09, FV5). Moreover, they agreed that food heritage features the taste of the local spices and ingredients of one region or state (M = 4.08, FV1) and representative of flavourful traditional recipes (M = 4.02, FV2). Lastly, it also associated with unique sensory properties (M= 4.00, FV4)

Table 3: Reported Mean Score for Attribute: Food characteristic

Items	Food Characteristics	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value (2 sided)
	Staple Ingredients			
SI1	Food heritage is usually connected with staple ingredients used in specific occasion or celebration	3.98	0.709	0.000
SI2	Food heritage is usually associated with the local staple diets	4.06	0.659	0.000
SI3	Food heritage is usually related to common acceptable ingredients used by the local people	4.05	0.655	0.000
SI4	Food heritage is usually related to common acceptable ingredients used by the local people	4.02	0.680	0.000
SI5	Food heritage can be attributed to food consumption of a specific community based on the lifestyle and socioeconomic	3.99	0.674	0.001
	Flavour Principle			
FV1	Food heritage features the taste of the local spices and ingredients of one region or state	4.08	0.641	0.038

FV2	Food heritage is a representative of flavourful traditional recipes	4.02	0.687	0.017
FV3	Food heritage is identified through the authenticity of taste that is derived from the unique ingredients	4.13	0.635	0.000
FV4	Food heritage is usually associated with unique sensory properties	4.00	0.692	0.030
FV5	Food heritage is linked with the distinctive local ingredients of a region or state	4.09	0.633	0.000
Cooking Method				
CM1	The cooking is an important element in describing food heritage	4.04	0.687	0.026
CM2	Food heritage is usually prepared according to the traditional recipes	4.10	0.647	0.000
CM3	Food heritage usually consists of distinct techniques of preparation	4.03	0.677	0.013
CM4	Food heritage usually uses a specific method of cooking	4.05	0.664	0.050*
CM5	The cooking method of food heritage is not altered although it has been passed down from one generation to another	4.03	0.755	0.067*
Food Presentation				
FP1	Food heritage is usually linked with food appearance, describing a specific ethnic	4.03	0.697	0.003
FP2	Packaging of food shows the unique element of food heritage	4.12	0.675	0.002
FP3	Food presentation plays an important role in representing a specific celebration or festival	4.04	0.683	0.003
FP4	Food heritage served in an authentic way portrays distinctive cuisine of the region	4.04	0.651	0.000
FP5	Food heritage usually demonstrate how food is consumed by certain ethnics	3.95	0.692	0.005

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not Sure, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

\*Not Significant =  $p > 0.05$ . Note (n=676)

Items for cooking method exhibited mean scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.10 which indicated that respondents had agreed with almost all of the items and had shown significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) except for two items which showed no significance ( $p > 0.05$ ) between the age group. They agreed on food heritage is usually prepared according to the traditional recipes (M= 4.10, CM2); consists of distinct techniques of preparation (M= 4.03, CM3) and cooking is the important elements in describing food heritage (M= 4.07, CM1). Contrarywise, even though they agreed that it uses specific cooking method (M= 4.05, CM4) and the food is not altered although it has been passed down from one generation to another (M= 4.04, CM5), there are no differences in the opinion between the age groups.

Last but not least, mean scores under food presentation range from 3.95 to 4.12 specified respondents towards agreeing with all the items and all had shown significant

differences ( $p < 0.05$ ). They agreed that packaging of food shows the unique element of food heritage ( $M=4.12$ , FP2); served in an authentic way portrays distinctive cuisine of the region ( $M=4.04$ , FP4) and plays a vital role in representing a specific celebration or festival ( $M=4.04$ , FP3). It also linked with food appearance, describing a specific ethnic ( $M=4.03$ , FP1) and demonstrate how food is consumed by certain ethnics ( $M= 3.95$ , FP5).

Table 4: Reported Mean Score for Attribute: Value of uniqueness

Items	Value of Uniqueness	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value (2 sided)
	Variety and Convenient			
VC1	Food heritage such as <i>bahulu</i> , <i>kuih sepit</i> and <i>maruku</i> can be prepared or purchased in a variety of shapes and flavours	4.04	0.675	0.002
VC2	Common daily food such as <i>nasi lemak</i> can be eaten as breakfast, lunch or dinner	4.09	0.711	0.064*
VC3	Food heritage such as <i>sambal</i> -based dishes, grilled fish and chicken rice can be easily prepared at any time	4.07	0.639	0.003
VC4	I believe that food heritage which is served as food speciality can be consumed during any occasion	4.04	0.661	0.000
VC5	Traditional cakes in food heritage can be found throughout the year	4.07	0.667	0.000
	Process and Technology			
PT1	Food heritage could be further extended using technology but still maintains its originality	4.04	0.704	0.000
PT2	Technology application can be used to help the production of food heritage	4.03	0.668	0.000
PT3	Food heritage can be produced in mass production by using technology	4.09	0.665	0.000
PT4	Through technology, food heritage can be commercialised for the global market	4.07	0.628	0.000

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not Sure, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

\*Not Significant =  $p > 0.05$ . Note ( $n=676$ )

Based on Table 4, the value of uniqueness consists of variety and convenient; and process and technology. In variety and convenient, the mean scores range of 4.04 to 4.09 had indicated that respondents agreed with 4 of the items thus portraying significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) except for item VC2 which did not show a significant difference ( $p = 0.064$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) between the ages 30-35 and > than 36 years old. They had agreed that the food can be found throughout the year ( $M = 4.07$ , VC5); moreover, it can be easily prepared at any time ( $M = 4.07$ , VC3). It also served as food speciality that can be consumed in any occasion ( $M = 4.04$ , VC4); and can be prepared or purchased in a variety of shapes and flavours ( $M = 4.04$ , VC1). Although they do agree that food heritage is a common daily food that can be eaten as breakfast, lunch or dinner ( $M = 4.09$ , VC2); it is shown that there is insignificant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) in terms of the perception between age groups.

In-process and technology exhibited means scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.09 indicating that the respondents agreed with all the items and it has shown significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between the age group. They agreed that food heritage could be produced in mass production by using technology ( $M = 4.09$ , PT3); can be commercialised for the global market ( $M = 4.07$ , PT4); can be extended using technology but still maintains its originality ( $M = 4.04$ , PT1); and used to help the production of food heritage ( $M = 4.03$ , PT2).

Table 5: Reported Mean Score for Attribute: Practice and integration elements.

Items	Practices and Integration Elements	Mean	Std. Deviation	p-value (2 sided)
	Cross Culture and Commonality			
CC1	Food heritage that undergoes cross culture becomes more acceptable by diverse ethnic groups	4.08	0.623	0.000
CC2	Through cross culture, it would be able for food heritage to be prepared by other ethnic groups	4.07	0.629	0.002
CC3	Food heritage in the festival and religious ceremonies is generally recognised by various ethnic backgrounds	4.08	0.621	0.000
CC4	Food heritage can also represent cuisine from cross culture ethnicity	4.06	0.633	0.040
CC5	Food heritage is subjected to cross culture among ethnic groups	4.01	0.638	0.000

Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not Sure, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

\*Not Significant =  $p > 0.05$ . Note ( $n = 676$ )

Table 5 showed the attribute of practice and integration elements, and it exhibited mean scores ranging from 4.01 to 4.08, which indicated that respondents had agreed with all of the items and showed significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between age group. They had agreed that food heritage in festival and religious ceremonies are generally recognised by various ethnic backgrounds ( $M = 4.08$ , CC3); undergoes cross culture becomes more acceptable by diverse ethnic groups ( $M = 4.08$ , CC1); through cross culture, food heritage can be prepared by other ethnic groups ( $M = 4.07$ , CC2) and food heritage can also represent cuisine from cross-culture ethnicity ( $M = 4.06$ , CC4). Finally, they agreed that it is subjected to cross culture among ethnic groups ( $M = 4.01$ , CC5)

## 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has revealed findings on the perception of different age groups on food heritage determinants: historical elements, food characteristics, value & uniqueness and practice & integrations elements. Historical elements which consist of historical value, originality and traditional value showing the majority of the respondents agreed that these attributes play a role in representing food heritage with significant differences between age groups. However, under food characteristics elements that comprise of staple ingredients, flavour principles, cooking method and food

presentation, only cooking method items showed insignificant differences within age groups namely CM4 ( $p=0.050$ ) and CM5 ( $p=0.067$ ), in which only two of the statements are commonly accepted by different age groups. Contradict to Li (2018), different age groups have significant young adults who prefer more on cooking method and ingredients as the important factors on their acceptance on traditional foods.

Similar with the insignificant value of uniqueness elements whereby under only one items from variety and convenient item of VC2 ( $p=0.064$ ), the respondents of the items showed mean values which indicated that they agreed with the given statement in each element.

The overall mean value for each element also shows that majority of the respondents agreed with the statement given, and only minority responded near towards agreeing on the statements. This can conclude that the food heritage determinants are accepted by both groups of age between 30-35 and >36 years old categories.

To summarise, food heritage determinants do have an impact on the perception of different group age. Food heritage may be valued differently with the age group. In the effort of government or organisation in promoting food heritage, they have to select suitable age group that may accept the value of food heritage as well as recognising the importance of having food heritage determinants that may contribute towards the national identity.

The study requires further confirmation through the replication of the study in the broader scope using other variables such as socio-demographic (e.g. age, educational background, gender and ethnicity) and this paper undoubtedly contributes to the current literature on the public perception of food identity attributes. On the practical perspective, these attributes can be used as a measurement tool for responsible agencies in addition to what they are currently using in developing and recognising the national food heritage. Finally, recognising and preserving our food heritage not only benefit the present society and the nation but the future generation and the country as a whole.

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