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CHETTI MELAKA OF THE STRAITS: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER OF MILLENNIAL INTENTION TO CONSUME PERANAKAN INDIAN CUISINE

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, the Chetti is a minority ethnic group that the locals hardly recognise. As a result, it may lead to the extinction of the ethnic group. In order to sustain food authenticity over generations, heritage cuisines of each ethnic group in Malaysia must keep their originality as food is generally regarded as a reflection of one's identity and an essential component of cultural riches and heritage. Thus, this conceptual paper focuses on the potential predictors that could influence millennials' intention to consume Peranakan Indian Cuisine, known as Chetti ethnic due to the lack of literature exploring this ethnicity. It is crucial to understand Millennials' preferences as they make up most of the consumer market and will continue to be significant over the following years. The Chetti ethnicity's uniqueness is valuable to the country as it promotes heritage tourism. It is also an effort to educate the community, which leads to the importance of this study.

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1. Introduction

The Chetti ethnic group is a Malaysian minority Peranakan ethnic group with a unique culture. Despite their historical importance in the development of Malaysia's multi-ethnic culture, the Indian Peranakans (also known as the Chettis) are almost unknown even among Malaysians (Mohd Fikri, Abdul Rahman, & Noh, 2021). The word Chetti is the most commonly used in Malaysia that refers to the Chettiars, whose ancestry may be traced back to Malacca's *Kampung Keling*. Because of this strong link, the group is known for its socioeconomic standing as money-lenders, and the name Chetti in the local context typically connotes "money-lenders" (Mohamed, 2009). Although the ethnic Chetti culture and cuisine are unique and differ from others, the attention and awareness of the community are less compared to Baba Nyonya Peranakan. Indeed, the Chetti

ethnic group's culture, cuisine and uniqueness are valuable assets for the country's gastronomy and heritage tourism.

A significant dish of the Chetti cuisine that sets them above the rest is *sambal telur belimbing*, a delightfully spicy meal prepared with fish roe taken from *ikan parang* (wolf herring) and *belimbing buluh* in a wonderful marriage of flavours (Durai, 2019). *Pindang ikan parang, pindang nenas udang, timun cili cuka, urap kulit timun, cencaluk, and ikan goreng* are another examples of symbolic Chetti cultural food (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). Moreover, a different preparation method of Chetti ethnic cuisine is an important characteristic representing the ethnicity and contributes to a flavourful and aromatic cuisine. The originality of Chetti cuisine is highlighted by the use of fresh herbs and the use of a "metate" throughout the preparation process.

Culinary preferences can be acquired and passed along more quickly than other cultural assets like language and belief systems, which makes ethnic food the ideal medium for developing ethnic identity and national heritage that can serve as a tourist attraction (Ting, Tan, & John, 2017) (May, Aziz, Latip, Amin, & Jailani, 2021). In order to sustain food authenticity over generations, heritage cuisines of each ethnic group in Malaysia must keep their originality (Omar & Omar, 2018). As a result, this study will aid as a underline in understanding consumption intentions for Chetti ethnic food, to fill the gap that has been identified, as there has been little research on millennials' interest for ethnic foods (Kumar & Smith, 2018). This idea focuses on reviewing and conceptualising the vast literature that various academics have conducted in the ethnic food area to bridge the gap in understanding consumption intention among millennials, ensuring ethnic food's survival.

2. Critical needs for the study

Food is regarded as a reflection of one's identity as well as an important component of cultural riches and heritage (Ting et al., 2017). Indeed, ethnic food is an essential component of ethnic identity and must be preserved (May & Latip, 2021; May, Latip, Jailani, Amin, & Kadir, 2020). The aesthetic values of ethnic food have been diminished due to the urbanisation's social transformations in cultural preparations, traditional servings, and the authentic taste and image of the food, as people tend to serve poor quality food without using the correct preparation methods (Omar & Omar, 2018). Furthermore, consumption of Malaysian ethnic cuisine is rapidly declining due to globalisation, posing a threat to its authenticity (Omar & Omar, 2018). Additionally, the increasing availability of rapid, immediate, and ready-to-eat (RTE) food has significantly impacted modern lifestyles, resulting in the loss of ethnic foods (Omar & Omar, 2018).

The Indian Peranakans, also known as the Chettis, have historically played a significant role in the development of Malaysia's multi-ethnic culture, yet even Malaysians scarcely recognise them (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). The ethnic food aficionados have yet to pay the same attention to Chetti cuisine (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). In addition, these cuisines and culinary cultures were mainly confined to the general population, necessitating ethnocentric perceptions of food from other ethnic groups (Ishak, Zahari, Talib, & Hanafiah, 2019). Although Chetti cuisine has been there for decades, the majority of ethnic food connoisseurs in the area are unfamiliar with it (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). The younger Chetti generations are either unaware of or uninterested in their ancestral culture, which explains why Chetti cuisine is mostly unknown (Paulo, 2018).

The current study, however, is limited to a few ethnic groups in Malaysia. Few studies have been conducted on other ethnic groups (Ting et al., 2017). The study's potential constraint may have been highlighted by the absence of literature and empirical investigations on ethnic gastronomy in Malaysia (Ting, de Run, Cheah, & Chuah, 2016). Very few studies examine people's intentions to eat ethnic food (Komariah, Razzaq, Nugraheni, Lastariwati, & Mahfud, 2020). As a result, of their distinct behaviour in comparison to earlier generations, their shared values, enjoyment of life

events, pursuit of specific goals, and purchasing behaviour, millennials have emerged as an intriguing population to examine (Jorge, Lopez-Valeiras, & Gonzalez-Sanchez, 2020). Therefore, the researcher must begin focusing on this group for the study, particularly to assist in preserving ethnic food for future generations (Ishak et al., 2019). As a result, the idea will look at the factors that influence millennials' desire to eat Chetti ethnic food.

3. Literature review

Chetti ethnic and cuisine

Chetti cuisine and its culinary heritages may be traced back to inter-marriages between South Indian traders and native women in Malacca during the fifteenth century when the state was a busy Ent-repot for foreign spice traders coming via the Straits of Malacca (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). As a result of developing economic relations with the Malays, many Indians, particularly traders from India's Coromandel Coast, migrated to Malacca (Moorthy, 2021). One of the most intriguing aspects of the Chetti culture is their food, which is influenced by both Indian and Malaysian forebears and has evolved into a distinct culinary style that has remained consistent over time (Leow, 2021). It brings together the best of Malay and Indian cuisines, culminating in the creation of a unique culinary system (Reddy, Dam, & Rob, 2020).

Malay cuisine, as well as other Peranakan influences, such as the Baba-Nyonyas, have a strong influence on Chetti cuisine (Kareyst, 2019). Chetti's favourites are *pindang ikan parang*, *pindang nenas udang*, *sambal telur belimbing*, *timun cili cuka*, *urap kulit timun*, *cencaluk*, and *ikan goring* (Durai, 2019). In addition, common local ingredients such as *serai* (citronella grass), *lengkuas* (wild ginger), and *belacan* (shrimp paste) are frequently used in Malacca's Chetti community cuisines (Leow, 2016).

Chetti cuisine incorporates typical Malay ingredients like the bony *ikan parang* (wolf herring fish) and coconut milk as basic ingredients (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). Although Chetti's *pindang* is produced with Malay ingredients and skills, it has its own unique flavour (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). Chetti *pindang* is a thick, creamy meal cooked with fresh spices pounded into a fine paste and topped in thick coconut cream, with wolf herring (Mohd Fikri et al., 2021). In Malay cuisine, a fish dish with the same name may be found (Mohammad, 2019). In contrast, Malay *pindang* is made with a small amount of sliced fresh spices and fish without coconut milk (Mohammad, 2019). Therefore, this research will focus on millennials' consumption intentions regarding Chetti ethnic food.

Millennial generation and study context

Millennials are a significant consumer sector and will continue to grow in importance over the next few decades (Jorge et al., 2020). The millennial generation, which includes those born between 1980 and 2000, entered young adulthood in the early twenty-first century (Nicolau, Guix, Hernandez-Maskivker, & Molenkamp, 2020). Various publications described the millennial generation differently (Jorge et al., 2020). Millennials, often known as generation Y, are people between the ages of 19 and 37 (Zehra, 2020). Millennials have emerged as the most powerful generation in the world (Thanos & Clark, 2019). To put it another way, knowing the behaviours of Millennials is very important since they represent future customers (Zehra, 2020). This consumer group uniquely purchases food compared to other groups, is more conscious of their eating habits, and more likely to quickly discover a new food product on the market (Jorge et al., 2020).

The millennial age has piqued researchers' interest since it represents an enticing population for food preparedness all over the world (Jorge et al., 2020). Many people consider Generation Y one of the most different generations in history (Thanos & Clark, 2019).

Argument of previous studies

There is an impact on millennials' consumption intentions towards Chetti ethnic food. According to a study of Chinese domestic visitors, their opinions influence travellers' propensity to consume local food (Zhang, Chen, & Hu, 2019). For example, people who believe ice cream is excellent are more inclined to buy and consume it than those who believe it is terrible (Hsu, Robinson, & Scott, 2018). In the context of this research, millennials who believe Chetti ethnic food is good are more inclined to eat it. Moreover, in a prior study, subjective norms were found to predict gastronomic preferences (Ting, Fam, Jun Hwa, Richard, & Xing, 2019). Subjective norms and a desire to try new cuisines might provide more information on ethnic cuisine consumption intentions (Ting et al., 2017). This is expected to be the case in this study of millennials' attitudes regarding Chetti ethnic cuisine consumption. A prior study on traditional Taiwanese cuisine found that subjective norms are directly, positively, and significantly associated with the inclination to buy traditional Taiwanese food (Hsu et al., 2018).

Additionally, there is a substantial link between perceived behavioural control and the desire to eat ethnic foods (Ting et al., 2019). Perceived behavioural control had a considerable impact on respondents' purchasing intentions (Hsu et al., 2018). According to (Ting et al., 2019), the strongest link observed is between perceived behavioural control and the desire to eat Dayak cuisine. As a result, perceived behavioural control may have a role in this study of millennials' intentions to consume Chetti ethnic food.

According to (Mardatillah, 2020), authentic and fascinating ethnic food has the capacity to influence a person's decision. It is considered authentic when food ingredients are used, prepared, and presented in line with local customs and traditions (Gupta & Duggal, 2021). To successfully improve impressions of authenticity, ethnic food suppliers should recognise those components of ethnic food production stages, such as preparation, presentation, and consumption, that are vital in giving real experiences (Youn & Kim, 2017). Previous research has indicated that cultural and authentic encounters that provide enlightenment and enrichment motivate people to eat a range of ethnic meals at a location (Gupta & Duggal, 2021). This shows that millennials value ethnic cuisine authenticity because they desire authentic experiences (Zhang et al., 2019). Perhaps there is a link between perceived authenticity and the likelihood of eating Chetti ethnic food.

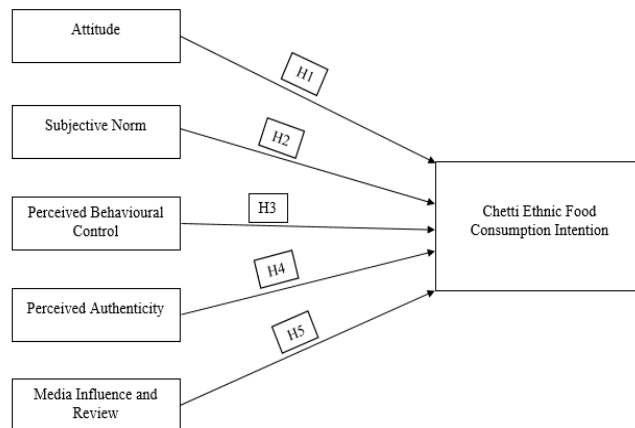
Moreover, ethnic food consumption, taste, style, restaurant characteristics, hospitality, manners and etiquette, class and difference, identity and belonging, historical and cross-cultural distinctions may all be found in television and radio programmes (Ishak et al., 2019). Food evaluations in magazines, public transit, and schools can increase the likelihood of intention to consume (Qutteina, De Backer, & Smits, 2019). The rise in popularity of media-influenced and produced pictures explains why people want to consume ethnic foods (Le, Arcodia, Novais, & Kralj, 2019). According to studies, the media is a critical news source that influences people's eating habits (Smith, Kelly, Yeatman, & Boyland, 2019). Consumers from varied backgrounds who often contact one another through various platforms and media expand their knowledge and willingness to try new cuisine, particularly local or ethnic cuisine (Ting et al., 2019). Millennials' willingness to try ethnic foods is impacted by positive recommendations and reviews from others, as well as the media (Kumar & Smith, 2018). Furthermore, in their example study, (Ramírez-Gutiérrez, Santana-Talavera, & Fernández-Betancort, 2021) verify the relationship between media review and ethnic food consumption intention. The media influence factor in online gastronomy reviews would benefit

millennial tourists' willingness to experience ethnic cuisine (Lim, Ng, Chuah, Cham, & Rozali, 2020). The media's impact and reviews of Chetti ethnic food might affect millennials' consumption intention.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the antecedents that influence millennials' intention to consume Chetti ethnic cuisine through the following research questions.

1. Does millennials consumption intention towards Chetti ethnic food influence by attitude?
2. How subjective norm influence the millennials consumption intention towards Chetti ethnic food?
3. What is the relation between perceived behavioural control and millennials consumption intention towards Chetti ethnic food?
4. How perceived authenticity can influence the millennials consumption intention towards Chetti ethnic food?
5. Does millennials consumption intention towards Chetti ethnic food affected by media influence and review?

Additionally, the following research framework is proposed for future research.



7. Proposed methodology

A non-experimental study environment will be used to conduct the quantitative study using the correlational study. A cross sectional study is preferred as the study aims only to collect data once, and no timeline comparison involved in study. This study's target population and sample are the millennials living and from Malacca. Chetti ethnic in Malaysia is largely based in 'Kampung Chetti' Malacca. Indeed, there is also a restaurant serving authentic ethnic Chetti cuisine in Malacca, besides the ethnic Chetti home visit program at 'Kampung Chetti'.

A non-probability sampling design will be used, which is also suitable for convenience sampling. The method best suits the study due to no sampling frame available for the target population. The unit of analysis for this study is individual.

The self-administered questionnaire will be designed with a 5-point Likert scale measurement. Two statistical analysis plans are to be used, which is Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Numerous types of analysis plan to be performed, including reliability test, missing data, outliers, normality-univariate, normality-multivariate, multicollinearity, descriptive statistics, common method bias and non-response bias, convergent validity, discriminant validity, coefficient of determination, effect size f^2 and predictive relevance. Before the data collection, a pilot study plan will be conducted to ensure reliable research items are used in the survey.

8. Conclusion

As Malaysia prepares to expand into a developed nation, more research on racial integration among multi-ethnics, particularly on the use of various types of ethnic and its cuisine, is needed critically. With the assumption that millennials, regardless of race or religion, would be at the forefront, millennials' preferences and awareness are critical to maintain the cultural heritage, including Chetti ethnicity.

This study must be carried out in order to meet societal demands, particularly in light of the millennials' desire to consume Chetti ethnic food. It is critical to share fresh information with the scientific community on ethnic food consumption intentions. This research also aims to assist scholars, non-government organisations and government organisations in designing and implementing effective ethnic food development strategies toward maintaining and preserving the culture. This study will allow communities to enhance living conditions, cultural awareness and experience with the extend of new information into the knowledge of local ethnic. Knowledgeable society members regard to the local ethnic and culture will strengthen the bond and unity of Multi-ethnic racial in Malaysia. Additionally, the study may help ethnic restaurant owners tap into the market for Chetti cuisine ethnic food, which is less common than Baba Nyonya ethnic food. Besides that, it is for the continued availability of numerous ethnic foods.

An investigation and understanding of factors potentially influence millennial consumption intention of ethnic food rather than their own culture not only to sustain and preserve the cultural heritage of minor ethnic, but as ethnic food is noted for its authenticity, many foodservice operators follow the same meal preparation and serving guidelines at home (Filimonau, Nghiem, & Wang, 2021). In today's digital era, online evaluations from social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and others) serve as an important channel of communication via the internet, allowing individuals to exchange information and express thoughts (Lim et al., 2020). As a result, a better knowledge of recent trends and online reviews may be able to assist academics and practitioners in developing gastronomy tourism strategies, particularly for promoting regional ethnic food, as supported by (Lim et al., 2020)(May, Aziz, Latif, et al., 2021).

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Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is associated with this publication.

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