

Young Generation's Attitudes and Preferences Towards Malay Traditional Food at Night Markets

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Abstract

The changing behaviour of the young generation towards Malay traditional food may pose challenges for traditional food vendors at night markets. This study investigates the purchasing behavior of the young generation towards Malay traditional food at night markets in Puncak Alam, Selangor. Employing a qualitative approach, data was gathered through observations, documentation, and spontaneous interviews. Findings reveal that food presentation, safety and cleanliness, word of mouth, taste, price, and portion size are determinants that influence the purchasing decisions of young consumers. Notably, visual appeal and hygiene practices attract customers, while peer recommendations and flavor evoke positive experiences. Reasonable pricing and generous portion sizes also play pivotal roles. Recommendations include maintaining hygiene standards, leveraging word-of-mouth marketing, preserving authentic flavors, offering reasonable prices, and providing generous portion sizes. Understanding these factors can aid vendors in sustaining and revitalizing the market for Malay traditional cuisine, ensuring its continued presence in Malaysia's lively night markets.

Keywords:

Consumer Behaviour, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Malay Traditional Food, Malaysia Night Market, Young Generation

1 Introduction

Malaysia's rich cultural heritage is deeply intertwined with its diverse culinary offerings (Jaafar, 2021), particularly Malay traditional food. Night markets for example in Puncak Alam, Selangor, stated by serve as vibrant socio-economic hubs where traditional delicacies are showcased, attracting both locals and tourists.

However, in recent years, there has been a growing concern regarding the changing patterns of buying behaviour among the young generation (Liang et al., 2021) towards Malay traditional food at these night markets. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing the purchasing decisions of the young generation in relation to Malay traditional food, thereby identifying key drivers and potential challenges faced by traditional food vendors in sustaining their market presence. The objective of this study is to delve into the patterns of buying behaviour exhibited by the young generation at night markets in Puncak Alam, Selangor. With the advent of globalization and the influence of Western fast-food chains, Reddy and van Dam (2020) enlightened that traditional food faces competition from alternative cuisines, and the young generation's preferences have begun to shift. Also, this research conducted to identify the specific factors that influence the buying decisions of the young generation towards Malay traditional food. The decision-making process of consumers is multifaceted and can involve a combination of internal and external factors (Hussain et al., 2020). Another crucial aspect to explore is the cultural influence and perception surrounding Malay traditional food among the young generation. According to Misran (2022), traditional dishes hold not only historical significance but also contribute to a sense of cultural identity. Kapelari (2020), also stated that it is essential to investigate whether the young generation perceives these dishes as an integral part of their cultural heritage or merely as a gastronomic option. Understanding their attitudes towards Malay traditional food will help in devising effective marketing strategies to promote the preservation and appreciation of these culinary treasures.

The changing behaviour of the young generation towards Malay traditional food may pose challenges for traditional food vendors at night markets. Identifying these challenges, such as changing consumer tastes, products, varieties, consumers, ethnicities, preferences, and product pricing which according to Zhao et al., (2021) have a direct influence on the buying behaviour of consumers that will aid in developing proactive measures to sustain and revitalize the market for traditional cuisine. Additionally, this research will explore potential opportunities for vendors to adapt their offerings and marketing approaches to cater to the evolving preferences of the young generation while preserving the essence of Malay traditional food. Thus, by investigating the patterns of buying behaviour and understanding the buying decision process, cultural influence, and perception, this research aims to provide valuable insights for vendors and policymakers alike (Hussain & Huang, 2022). Sustaining the appreciation for Malay traditional food among the young generation is crucial not only for preserving cultural heritage but also for fostering a sense of identity and community pride (Hamzah et al., 2015; Aris et al., 2022). Through this investigation, we can work

towards promoting the rich tapestry of traditional cuisine and ensure its continued presence in the vibrant night markets of Malaysia.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Buying Behaviour

The aspect of consumer buying behaviour is always associated with the process of selection, purchase and, finally, consumption of the products, goods or even services to meet the wants and demands. According to Orji et al. (2017) and Sundareswaran et al. (2022), consumer behavior is identified as the study of people's needs, motivations, and thought processes used in aiming to choose a product over another as well as the trend of purchasing different goods or services. However, convincing consumers to develop an intention to purchase, for instance, is not an easy mission due to several reasons. In this sense, there are few underlying factors determining consumers to conclude the ultimate final decision.

Therefore, it is critically important for marketers to comprehend the factors that affected consumer purchasing process towards buying decision (Khaniwale, 2015; Noel, 2017; Al-Salamin & Al-Hassan, 2016; Köylüoğlu, 2022). In the context of consumer buying decisions, certainly, there are several factors affecting the process. To explain the situation, Lamb et al. (2004) and Rumagit (2022) mentioned, there are four main factors or forces influencing consumer behavior namely (i) social factors, (ii) cultural factors, (iii) personal factors and (iv) psychological factors. On the contrary, Ramya and Ali (2016) just added an extra factor which is called, economic factor. From this perspective, let's narrow it down to the aspect of food products. Naturally, consumers have its own dynamic standards and criteria when it comes to purchasing food products. As stated by Dyuff (1998) and Roose (2020), in general, consumers will mediate over generic yet crucial standards such as taste, nutritional value, reliability, quality, price and convenience of the food. Similarly, in other studies, Sanlier and Karakus (2010) also Badari and Kei (2022) carefully mentioned that consumers eventually will give thought on such factors like appearance, purchasing knowledge and food safety towards buying food products.

Principally, the factors of consumer buying products that are mentioned above will be impacted towards the decision-making process. In the domain of consumer behaviour, the buying decision requires a certain process to visualize the phenomenon. Therefore, the five-stage buying decision process model that was introduced by the scholar, Engel et al. (1968) is the most ideal model to showcase, throughout the study. As believed by Kotler and Keller (2006), the five-stage buying decision model is extensively applied among marketers in gaining clearer yet better conception about customers together with the behavior. In the middle of the process, Engel et al. (1968) acknowledged five different stages involved, which are (i) need recognition, (ii) information search, (iii) evaluation of alternatives, (iv) purchase decision and (v) post-purchase decision behaviour.

2.2 Traditional Food

Timelessly, when discussing traditional foods, people will associate them with ancient dishes. Even more, it will be correlated with specific food with unique technique, using rare yet uncommon raw ingredients and classic old-fashioned recipes. As mentioned by Cayot (2007) and Guine et al. (2021), traditional foods are usually related to local foods and artisan foods that practice specific ingredients, regions of the production together with specific preparation of methods and techniques. Also, the scholar believed its associated with foods prepared by grandmother or by the native people of its origin (Cayon, 2007; Aris et al., 2022) . Conversely, traditional food is strongly believed as an epitome of both cultural diversities along with an individual wisdom that has immensely immersed via generations until cultural heritage and an identity were established (Mihiranie et al., 2020). In a different view, correspondingly, Nor et al. (2012) and Fikri et al. (2021) mentioned traditional food is food that has been passed down and consumed by multi-generations according to its locality, respectively. Throughout the study, researchers will emphasize more on traditional food as it is believed to act as a unification tool despite being seen as a cultural identity.

2.3 Malay Traditional Food

In the scenario of Malaysia, there are innumerable exquisite traditional foods, comprising three major races like Malay, Chinese and India under a roof, harmonically. In Malay culture, specifically, there are numerous well-known traditional cuisines depending on its own setting, custom and folkways. According to Raji et al (2017) and Kamaruzaman et al. (2022), Malay traditional food is defined as food that has been produced with touch of locals, along with unique and authentic local identity in the community of Malay culture. Famously, Malay traditional food has a variety type of exquisite cuisines from Nasi Lemak, Rendang Nasi Kerabu, Laksa to Apam Balik. Notwithstanding with above matter, Sharif et al (2013) and Abdullah et al. (2021) described, Malay traditional food incorporates a variety of spices and herbs in the cooking, that has spicy and flavorful taste as aftereffects. In common traditional Malay cuisine, there are several ingredients involved in the cooking process incorporating distinctive flavors like spicy, shape flavorful. Generally, the spices and herbs are divided into two types of categories: (i) fresh and (ii) dried ingredients. Yet, in the most of Malay cooking, it is always comprising such ingredients like serai (lemongrass), bunga kantan (ginger torch flower), daun pandan (pandan leaves), kunyit (fresh turmeric) and daun kesum (laksa leaf). Meanwhile, in spite of above-mentioned fresh herbs and spices, traditional dried spices also influenced the most common, well-known Malay cuisines. For instance, rempah tiga sekawan (comprising three most-used spices like cloves seed, cinnamon stick, and star anise). According to Abdullah et al (2013), jintan manis, jintan putih, biji ketumbar and biji sawi are commonly used in cooking the Malay traditional cuisine.

2.4 Malaysia Night Market

In the setting of night market or occasionally, called night bazaar is a one stop street market that typically run at night for shopping purposes. At the night market, the consumer will leisurely search out, from food items to non-food items like clothes, fresh produce, groceries, and antique items. As stated by both Hou (2007); Aziz (2012) and Ramli and Jamri (2021), they agreed that a night market is a small business that operates in the evening time consisting of a range of cooked food and low-priced products to be sold to the customer. As mentioned by Huang et al (2009), in different angles of fact, the night market is well described as an evening setting for trading platforms incorporating small businesses that present a variety of cooked food and cheaper goods. Significantly, in the context of Malaysia, night markets can be accessed in almost every small town, city, and village in every state with different setting that are held on different days of the week, respectively. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2023), night market is literally translated as 'Pasar Malam'. In the Malay culture, Pasar Malam is famously known as the venue with the open-air shopping concept, along with the diversity of hawkers, pretty traders occupying across the street at the designated section of stall. Artistically, the unique Malaysian culture portrayed Pasar Malam as the outlet for people to go for eating preferences, interaction approaches, and, for some people it could be some sort of relaxation activity for some ethnics in Malaysia (Ishak et al., 2012; Hanan et al., 2021).

3 Methodology

In correspondence to this study, a qualitative approach was employed as a methodology to identify the young generation choose to purchase traditional Malay food at Saujana Utama and Bandar night markets in Puncak Alam, Selangor. The unit of analysis is every young generation between the ages of 18 and 25 who purchased traditional Malay food at night market at least once. Due to the unavailability of a sample frame, nonprobability sampling is employed for this investigation. The sampling method employs purposive sampling, targeting the young generation ranging of 18 and 25 who have purchased Malay traditional cuisine at the night market. Prior to the start of the research, the sample size had yet to be determined. After data saturation, the study's sample size is twelve individuals. In addition to field observation, documentation and spontaneous interviews have been conducted to confirm the age and data of the respondents. Observation is conducted by monitoring two Malay traditional night market stalls, one in Saujana Utama and another one in Bandar, Puncak Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. These locations were chosen to enrich the data collection on how young people choose to purchase traditional foods at night markets.

Observations have been conducted since buyers approached the stalls, asked, and purchased traditional cuisine from the stall. It is bolstered by documentation and interviews regarding why they purchased these items. Using narrative analysis, the analyst will choose to examine the acquired data and information.

Researchers use narrative analysis, a form of analytic framework, to interpret stories recounted in the research context or in everyday life. Using narrative analysis, the scholar generates a variety of interpretations and conclusions with equal significance and meaning. This is accomplished by focusing on, among other things, the story's structure, functions, substance, and performance (Wong & Breheny, 2018). Narratives play a crucial role in relating events, elucidating their significance, and understanding their relevance to individuals. In addition, narratives are more than a chronological arrangement of events; they are purposefully structured to convey a particular meaning and provide insights into our identity and the way we wish to be perceived by others (Riessman, 2008). Consequently, using narrative analysis, the researcher will present a narrative based on the data garnered from fieldwork observations, note-taking, visual documentation, photography, and other sources pertinent to the research questions at hand.

4 Findings

4.1 The Food Presentation (Display)



Figure 1: (A) The colour of the Apam Balik is vibrant and multicoloured. (B) The presentation of Apam Balik looks presentable and mouth-watering.

The night market entices the young generation not only with its mouth-watering array of Malay traditional delicacies but also with its captivating food presentation. The sight of colourful dishes beautifully arranged on a clean silver tray, illuminated by the warm glow of flickering lamps, awakens the senses. This carefully crafted presentation tantalizes the taste buds and creates an immersive dining experience that goes beyond just the act of eating. During the observation, there is a mother with her teenage daughter who was in the process of purchasing a traditional snack. The look on their faces really shows that they were captivated by the colour of the food. After they hear the question that has been asked, the young daughter immediately responded:

According to Informant 1:

“...The colour of the food itself is vibrant and looks interesting. Look at this fluffy apam balik, it has colourful ingredients inside. The seller even arranged it nicely on the counter. This snack is my favourite.”

The saying, ‘You eat with your eyes first,’ seems to hold true for the young generation's dining preferences at the night market. The visually striking display of Malay traditional food sparks curiosity and encourages adventurous eating. Dishes that are meticulously presented often attract more attention and are more likely to be chosen over less visually appealing alternatives, even if the taste profile remains similar.

Onto the next food stall, the vendor sold Murtabak, one of Malaysian famous classic food. There are at least 5 males where hovering in front of the stall waiting their turn to buy the food. Seems like they are just got back from their workplace. Seems like the aroma really captured their taste bud as it feels like floating inside a spice garden. One of them stated,

According to Informant 2:

“...The food presentation is fascinating, and it intrigues me to buy it. The vendor also packed it in the paper nicely. The onion pickle is beautiful too.”

Another male customer also said that,

According to Informant 3:

“...Can you agree with me if I said when you see this murtabak and the way they stack it, it reminds you of bazaar Ramadhan? Coincidentally, the colour looks appetizing enough for me to buy two. It is my favourite night market food after all.”

The culinary display at the night market honours the rich cultural legacy of the Malays and stirs up strong feelings of nostalgia. Young Malaysians, who are frequently reared in metropolitan settings, find comfort in the sight of familiar foods that bring back memories of their youth or special occasions. The sight of traditional Malay cuisine evokes a sense of pride and a connection to one's heritage served in antique serving ware and garnished with elaborate garnishes. The food presentation at the night market showcases an interesting blend of modernity and tradition. While classic dishes are beautifully presented in their authentic form, innovative twists and creative plating techniques also emerge. The art of food presentation at the night market is often carried out by skilled local artisans who have honed their craft over generations. The appreciation of their work by the young generation not only sustains this tradition but also empowers these artisans economically.

Supporting local artists and their craft adds depth and significance to the act of dining, turning it into a culturally enriching experience.

4.2 The Safety and Cleanliness



Figure 2: (A) The seller practiced good personal hygiene by wearing hand gloves and apron. (B) Wearing gloves is mandatory to safely pack food to customer.

Amidst the enchanting atmosphere, concerns arise about the safety of the traditional food offered. With street vendors preparing dishes in open-air settings, questions are raised about food handling practices, potential contamination, and adherence to hygiene standards. This prompts the young generation to ponder whether these beloved delicacies are truly safe to consume.

Throughout the observation, it is revealed that most Malay traditional food vendors at the night market prioritize hygiene and cleanliness. Many of them take regular health inspections seriously, ensuring the food preparation areas are kept tidy and sanitized. While the open-air environment poses challenges, these vendors employ creative solutions to maintain cleanliness. According to a few customers, some of them commented towards the question given.

According to Informant 2:

“...As far as I know, most of the vendors do practice good hygiene. They wore aprons and wear hand gloves most of the time. I never doubted the hygiene they practice.”

Some of them also mentioned this,

According to Informant 3:

“...They used to pack laksa into transparent beg but they clipped it with a stapler. So, it is quite dangerous since the bullet is small. But since then, they all used rubber band which is safe and friendly too.”

Interestingly, the young generation's awareness and vocal demands for better food safety practices played a significant role in encouraging vendors to enhance their hygiene measures. As more young consumers seek assurances regarding food safety, vendors are becoming more responsive to their concerns, aiming to create a safer dining experience. Though the vendors displayed commendable hygiene practices, there was room for improvement in food handling awareness. The findings indicate that while some vendors followed best practices, others lacked proper glove usage and failed to protect the food from exposure to dust and insects such as flies.

Striking a balance between preserving cultural traditions and embracing modern food safety standards is crucial. Young consumers appreciate the authenticity of Malay traditional food and want to ensure that these culinary treasures endure for future generations without compromising on health and cleanliness. Encouraging food vendors to maintain high standards of cleanliness, while respecting the essence of tradition, is essential. Regular workshops and training sessions can be organized to enhance food handling awareness among vendors, ensuring a safe and enjoyable culinary experience for all.

4.3 Word of Mouth



Figure 3: (A) Customers were lined up for the scrumptious Laksa Utara recommended by their colleagues and friends. (B) The Laksa Utara shop was recommended by @mie_foodievlog, one of TikTok users, and a video was uploaded in the application

In Puncak Alam night market, a group of young women chatted and giggled as they strolled through the colorful vendors. Their eyes lit up when they noticed the lengthy line forming at the Laksa stand. They decided to join the line out of curiosity, their joy evident in their expressions. With an enthusiastic smile, one of them answered the question of why they came to the stall and joined in a queue,

According to Informant 4:

"...Our friends recommended this location. They said it's the finest Laksa they've ever had, and we're inclined to believe them."

The other two females chimed in:

According to Informant 5:

"...Yes, our friend's recommendation is crucial for us when trying new foods, said another lady. We frequently request recommendations from our friends, notably for traditional dishes such as Laksa."

Their eagerness to try new items, fueled by the recommendations of their peers, painted a compelling picture of how word of mouth influenced their decision-making. It was as if culinary curiosity and trust spread like a chain reaction from one friend to the next. The girls eventually reached the front line, eager to try what their friends had praised so highly. They ordered their bowls of Laksa with eager expressions on their features. As they took their first mouthfuls, their expressions shifted from surprise to delight. One of them remarked,

According to Informant 7:

"...This is amazing! I understand why our peers would recommend it. The fragrances are extraordinary!"

The others nodded in accord as they savored the tasty Laksa. It was evident that word of mouth had not let them down; it had enhanced their culinary experience by adding a sense of shared enthusiasm. The younger generation relied on their peers' personal experiences and recommendations to make decisions. This interaction illustrated how cuisine can foster a sense of community and connection. It was about sharing experiences, creating memories, and nurturing community among friends, not just dining. Attempting the suggested Laksa became a memorable experience in and of itself, strengthening the connections between these young people as they explored the varied culinary offerings of their culture.

4.4 Taste of the Food



Figure 4: (A) Customers were lined up for the scrumptious Laksa Utara. (B) One of the customers smiling ear to ear getting her Laksa Utara. (C) The *mise-en-place* of appetizing Laksa Utara.

The strong *Laksa Utara* stall and the sizzling *Keropok Lekor* stand seemed to have a magnetic draw on the younger population as the Puncak Alam night market bustled with activity. Despite the remarkable length of the lines, the youthful visitors did not appear to mind waiting. It demonstrated the charm of these dishes. As the observation has done, the patient expressions of those waiting in line, the observers couldn't help but ponder what compelled them to return multiple times. Over three observations, some of the same individuals eagerly returned to these stalls. A few of them to inquire about their fascination with Laksa and Keropok Lekor. A young woman remarked with a smile,

According to Informant 11:

"...It's all about the flavour." "The flavours are just right for my taste buds, and I can't help but return for more. It reminds me of my mom' Laksa, very memorable".

It became clear that the flavour of these traditional dishes resonated with their taste buds. The Laksa presented a delightful *mélange* of flavours – a scrumptious combination of savoury, sour, and spicy tastes. In addition, the freshness of the ingredients used added an additional layer of attraction. The *Keropok Lekor* seems equally captivating. They characterised its flavour as an explosion of savoury, sweet, and spicy elements, a true delight for the tongue. The fact that these fish-based, crispy treats were produced on-site enhanced the experience, making them even more irresistible. As researchers listened to their enthusiastic responses, another person stated:

According to Informant 12:

"...Keropok Lekor tastes so good, chewiness, and then crispy outside and dipped with the sauce is a perfect combination".

The appreciation for these dishes exceeded simple hunger based on an emotive connection to the flavours and the memories they elicited. For some, the voyage evoked memories of their youth or family gatherings where these delicacies were cherished. The young generation's decision to purchase traditional foods such as Laksa and Keropok Lekor was not based solely on price or convenience; rather, it stemmed from their passion for flavour and the authentic enjoyment of these culinary marvels. The food's flavour could create enduring memories and bring people together. This sentiment was embraced by the younger generation, whose refined palates made traditional foods an integral part of their experiences and each delicacy a delectable journey of flavours.

4.5 Price



Figure 5: (A) The seller being transparent regarding to list of prices by displaying them. (B) The reasonable list of prices of Nasi Lemak start as low as RM2.00.

A group of girls were swarming to the Nasi Lemak stall, and they were readily taken out their money to purchase the dish from the seller. Interestingly, the seller and the girls were having joyful conversation like they had established connection with each other. Based on the observation together with impromptu interview, the group of girls mentioned that it has become a weekly routine to pay visit to Puncak Alam's night market and they are indeed, regular customer. Apart of the quality and delicious taste of Nasi Lemak, they agreed the price offered by the seller is reasonable. Some of the girls said that the selling price for Nasi Lemak is a little bit under-price compared to other stall and that is one of the factors they kept coming back.

Back to the price contextual via observation, a portion of a plain Nasi Lemak offered at cost of RM 2.00 per average. Other than that, Nasi Lemak with fried chicken, for instance, will cost about RM 5.00 per portion. Psychologically, with such offers, the informants agreed those figures are reasonably priced as compared to any other stall.

According to Informant 6:

“...I enjoy eating Nasi Lemak as it will give a whole satisfaction not just the taste but the price, particularly. A university student like me who is financially unstable, I can decide, either to eat a plain Nasi Lemak at a lower price or to enjoy eating nasi lemak with additional dishes at a wallet friendly price, still. Yet, most of the time, I prefer to buy plain nasi lemak as I fancy buying other foods as well”.

The girls happily shared their experience,

According to Informant 6:

“...After we finished our class, every Wednesday, me, and my girls will book taxi Grab and go to the night market together. What even funny, before the class were ended, we collectively list out foods that we fancy to buy for dinner and one of them is our favourite economical national dish, Nasi Lemak”.

Most of the stall that sell food products, based on the observation, the seller was displaying the price of their products. This procedure is vital to the consumer as they able to afford the food within their budget and importantly, the consumer able to select and compare the cheapest food price among the stalls. Though, a several mechanisms of displaying price were practised such as via paper price tag, banner, bunting and the recent one, electronic led price tag. However, there were numbers of stalls that did not practising price tag. Researcher asked a young woman regarding this matter, and she conscientiously replied,

According to Informant 8:

“...I honestly will only stop by at stall that display price of their food items. I did not bring a lot of cash with me, and I think it is a good formula for me to not overspend. And to be frank, I sprightly go and buy my favourite dish at my favourite stall. If I wanted to try something else, apart of type of food I fancy to eat, I will look into the price, usually at cheaper deal”.

4.6 Portion



Figure 6: (A) Assortment of dishes offered by the seller with reasonable portion (B) The big amount portion of Nasi Kerabu.

Portion of food can be one of the factors affecting the consumer decision to purchase food. Throughout the study, researchers found portion or sizing of a dish is one of the factors affecting the buying decision among the Gen-Z consumers. Based on the informant, he considered reasonable portion factor is important in the process of buying decision Malay traditional food, Nasi Kerabu particularly. An informant who studied in a university near to Puncak Alam shared his thought that a Nasi Kerabu with generous amount of portion is the best choice to buy. He shared his own experience attentively by saying,

According to Informant 9:

“...I am originally from Pasir Mas, Kelantan and by saying that I know you can tell I love my hometown dish, Nasi Kerabu. But here in Puncak Alam, it is difficult to not just get the right taste but with reasonable price and generous portion of Nasi Kerabu. Talking about portion, I found almost the exact same of big portion Nasi Kerabu at this stall and I am very happy. Plus, I am a big eater (while laughing) and I always go for bigger portion option of food”.

On the contrary, based on the informant's observation, he noticed that most of Nasi Kerabu sellers were cutting down portion size and selling it at a higher price. He gathered the information from the sellers thus carefully added that the increase of raw material cost was the factor why they act as such. Therefore, he insisted on buying Nasi Kerabu over a different seller that provides a bigger portion with a reasonable price. He mentioned as such,

According to Informant 10:

“...Undeniably, some sellers have reduced the portion of Nasi Kerabu by not adding other elements like salted egg or fish cracker. I personally love Nasi Kerabu, a good Nasi Kerabu must be completed with all the condiments. Therefore, I identified a few stalls that produced a complete Nasi Kerabu with a big, yet reasonable portion and I am a regular customer now”.

5 Discussion

Food presentation is a crucial thing to be taken care of because it helps to attract customers first-hand. It does not matter whether the food is a traditional or modern style, but the first impression of a meal often begins with its visual appeal, and this initial perception can significantly sway a customer's decision to purchase and enjoy the dish. Thus, meal that has been knowingly served with bright colours and eye-catching plating sends a message of care and attention to detail and implies that the food itself has also been thoughtfully and carefully prepared. On the contrary, a poorly presented or unappealing dish can deter customers from ordering it, even if the taste might be exceptional. Not to forget that food hygiene and safety also play important roles in determining what customers will buy especially in the night market since they are exposed to the open area. Customers value their well-being in today's culture and are becoming more selective about the food they eat. Customers are more likely to trust and have faith in the quality of the items being given when they witness excellent levels of cleanliness and safety practices at a food vendor. Customers are positively impacted by clean, well-maintained food preparation spaces, correct handling of products, and respect for food hygiene rules.

For the younger generation, word-of-mouth served as a powerful gastronomic guidance at the night market, bringing them memorable and delightful culinary experiences. Their decision-making was infused with increased enthusiasm and confidence due to the influence of their peers' suggestions. As a result, the night market was bustling with a variety of succulent foods, fostering an atmosphere of shared joy and togetherness among the visitors. The influence of these personal recommendations strengthened friendships and increased the overall enjoyment of exploring traditional Malay cuisine in the bustling market environment. Moreover, flavour plays a crucial role in persuading the younger generation to choose traditional Malay cuisine at the Night Market, as it evokes positive recollections of the meals that their moms prepared. When choosing traditional foods, the desire to enjoy the dishes tenderly prepared by their mothers is a significant determining factor for the younger generation particularly for those who live far away from their home. This bond is especially strong because many of the dishes that mothers prepare at home are rooted in the rich heritage of traditional cuisine, which has been handed down through the generations. Thus, the flavours and aromas of these familiar Night Market dishes evoke nostalgia and cultural continuity, making them even more appealing to younger customers.

In a sense of consumer behaviour, price is the most important aspect as it will be the only factor that generates revenue. Theoretically, good, cheap price affects the purchasing intention and decision among consumers. In the night market scene for instance, it is very important for sellers offering reasonable and best deal prices to reflect as well as to serve purpose to the theory of price in the night market. Indeed, consumer in keeping with the findings, the Gen-Z found that price is the critical factor in the process of purchasing decision Malay traditional food. Certainly, the cheaper, more reasonable price is, the higher purchasing intention for the Gen-Z to consume Malay traditional food. This affirmation can be positively allied with Abdullah-Al-Mamun and Robel (2014), the consumer is a rational entity when it comes to judging what benefit they wish to earn from the products or good paid. Portion is an elemental in the matter of gastronomical attributes, Malay traditional food. Nowadays, it is rare to see food sellers in a night market offer a great number of portions to consumers. As mentioned by the informant, a reasonable portion with a great deal affecting the purchasing decision. To put it simply, a great portion size together with the great deal price can build long lasting consumer relationships. Discussing portions, even so, there is a significant correlation between the portion size and mental simulation that led to satiation pleasure. Robust research found a top-down cognitive component likely linked to sensory habituation (Galak et al., 2009 & Redden et al., 2013). Thus, the interconnection between portion size and satiation pleasure to consumers, finally, can keep the purchasing decision way easier for consumers as well as night market sellers.

6 Conclusion

Ultimately, the pattern of young generation's behavior at night market is the continuity initiative towards the consumer behavior dynamism. Previous research, focusing on the customer buying behavior in the night market, meanwhile, this study added a new dimension and understanding regarding Malay traditional food, comprehensively. Without doubt, the shift in technology and modernization era will slowly be fading the continuity of Malay traditional food. Hence, to sustain and preserve the Malay food culture, it is beyond important by identifying the factors contributing to the young generation's behavior to purchase Malay traditional food. By activating such action, the traditions of Malay traditional foods stay alive and can be passed down to the generations.

7 About the author

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Author 2, a culinary instructor at Lombok Tourism Polytechnic and a recent gastronomy master's graduate from Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia, draws inspiration from the world of food. With a passion for culinary arts, he explores traditional and heritage foods, aiming to deepen appreciation and understanding of societal dynamics within the culinary sphere.

Author 3 is a small local caterer based in Perak has just completed a master 's degree. With Master in Gastronomy degree from Universiti Teknologi Mara, Malaysia in his hand, the author aimed to help Malay traditional cuisine, especially Perak heritage cuisine live again. The author recently published an article related to Perak food heritage. The author 3 also has a deep interest in innovative food and the cultural sustainability of Malay eating history and practices.

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